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She Might Have Done Better.



A NOVEL

— B Y —

W. H. BROWN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME TWO.

ST. JOHNS, P. Q.
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SHE MIGHT HAVE DONE BETTER.

VOLUME II.

CHAPTER I.

WHA'S ER MARRER WITH LITTLE NOSE, HATCHY?

Three weeks after his return to Toronto, from Lake Mor-daunt, in the cool dusk of a late summer's evening, Mr. Edwin Vance, as yet wholly unconscious of the black cloud looming up on his hitherto sunlit skies, started from his law-chambers, where he had been detained until an unusually late hour by some business of importance, to walk quietly homewards, and pass, as quietly, his evening in the society of his mother.

Notwithstanding his status of a happy, engaged lover, he did not appear to be in a very cheerful frame of mind, for he looked perturbed and anxious, while nervously and half-audibly he muttered his thoughts to himself, as he stepped out on his way. Even the beatific condition of an assured love does not appear to be free from its cares and anxieties, and unimmunity common to all things mundane. The troubles of the engaged, trivial though they may be, are, also, as a rule, viewed as evils of the first magnitude, and are fretted and fumed over in a corresponding degree.

Edwin Vance was fretted and worried this evening with a minor trouble, indeed, but its disturbing effect, was, for him, great enough.

Could he but have but foreseen the heavy cloud that over-

hung his path, that pall-like was enshrouding his life's happiness how trivial in comparison had been his little care.

"What in the world can be the matter at Lake Mordaunt?" he said to himself, as he walked on. "I do not at all understand it. Here it is, a fortnight yesterday, since I got Ethel's letter, her first letter, too, and not a word since from any of them. If my darling only knew how anxious it has made me, she would have written before this, and ended my uneasiness.

"Were it not out of all conscience to desert my client's interests just now, I would run down to Lake Mordaunt, to-morrow, for I cannot endure this suspense longer. Can it be that Ethel, or any of them, are ill? Yet, for that very reason, one would think, they would be all the more likely to write. Well, I'll wait until to-morrow evening, and, if I don't hear from Ethel, I'll give my cases to Ferretout to look after, and run down to see for myself what the reason of this unendurable silence can be."

Such were his meditations, as he pursued his course through the University grounds, his favorite short-cut on his way home.

From the noise and turmoil of the streets, the peaceful rustling of the foliage, the cool, shadowy depths of the tree-surrounded avenues formed a contrast ordinarily very attractive to him, but, on this evening, he was mentally too much in unrest to appreciate these beauties; for when two weeks have passed over a fond lover's head, without bringing him the expected missive from his fair one's hand, he is very likely to become wholly insensible to the natural charms which may surround him, his eyes open to little else save huge imaginary evils looming blackly up, phantasms of terror vastly more disproportionate to a seven-nights' delay, than twice the time could conjure to the merchant's eyes, when his goodly bark comes not to port.

His sombre reflections were, however, cut short by the sudden and distressful sounding of a woman's voice, screaming, in piercing accents for help, and coming apparently from a point of the carriage-road, twenty or thirty yards in advance, where

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the dark shadows of the trees made the deepening dusk into heavier darkness. Springing forward on the instant at the fullest speed of which he was capable, for the distressful cry roused all his chivalry, Edwin found himself a second later, and not a moment too soon, an actor in a scene where his physical prowess seemed likely to be put into immediate and stirring requisition.

Not a moment too soon. As he ran swiftly and silently up, he took in the situation at a glance.

A close carriage, attached to a pair of handsome and powerful horses, stood upon the road, into the door of which two men were endeavoring to force a young lady, who, with vigorous resistance, her hand clutching the wheel, opposed their efforts with her whole strength, while with loud and continued cries she called for assistance.

"Stop your infernal noise, will you?" screamed the man nearest him, in a shrill, squeaking voice, which, to Vance, seemed familiar, "Here, Jim, stuff something into her mouth, or we'll have the whole town about us," he continued. But he changed his note into a hideous yell, for Edwin, unnoticed in the melee, as he ran up delivered him a crashing blow in the face, which sent him bleeding and half-stunned to the ground. His companion, at the sudden attack, left his hold on the young lady, and sprang nimbly aside, while the driver, too busily engaged in reining in the affrighted horses to assist in the fray, gave his animals their heads and drove off at speed, leaving Edwin master of the field, with the girl he had rescued lying half-fainting in his arms.

Astonished at his easy victory, Edwin gazed a moment around him, as if expecting the advent of new enemies, but seeing none more formidable than he whom he had prostrated, who lay groaning and writhing about the road, he addressed himself to the lady whom he was supporting, and whose hysterical sobbing smote painfully upon his ear—

"You are safe, now, Madam, and need have no further fear.

Good gracious ! is it you, Miss Seaforth ? Who are they that attacked you thus ? Are you injured at all ?”

“ Oh ! Mr. Vance !” she returned, looking up, and regaining her feet. “ How thankful I am. You have saved me, indeed ; I am not injured, and feel well now, that you are with me.”

“ But who are the villains who attacked you ?” he excitedly asked. “ My poor Agnes ! But here is one of them, still. I’ll find out who he is, at all events,” and stepping up, he administered a vigorous kick in the side of the groaning wretch. “ Who are you, you scoundrel ?”

The unpleasing propulsion of a heavy boot sole, against a man’s ribs, if not a recognised tonic, is, at least, a powerful restorative and inciter of the locomotive functions.

With a yell, the kicked one sprang to his feet, and, throwing one terrified glance at the kicker, ran fairly away. A dozen paces off, he stopped, picked up a stone, threw it savagely back at his assaulter. “ I’ll pay you off, for this, Vance, see if I don’t !” he screamed, and continued his headlong course.

“ Why, if it isn’t Hatchitfess !” exclaimed the astonished Edwin, gazing after the fleeing figure of the discomfited exquisite, whose abrupt and ludicrous disappearance formed so appropriate an ending of his attempted abduction.

“ Oh ! let us go from this dreadful place, Mr. Vance. I am struck by the stone. Pray let us go !” and Agnes took his arm, and clung terrified to its support.

“ The cowardly villain ! Are you hurt, Miss Seaforth ? Do you think you can walk until we reach the street ? It is not far off.”

“ Oh, yes, I am not hurt ; but pray let us get away !” she returned, eagerly pressing forward.

The whole scene, not lasting a minute, had sprung upon him with such sudden surprise, and was solved with such equally bewildering abruptness, that Edwin Vance, yet labouring under intense excitement, could hardly realize that it was not some

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strange dream through which he had passed. There coursed through his brain a confused medley, compounded of screams, coach and horses, a struggling group, a young lady, and then a sudden disappearance ending the confused vision. He could hardly believe that it was Agnes Seaforth who hung upon his arm, still sobbing hysterically from her fright ; and, he had supported her along for some distance before he sufficiently collected his thoughts to question her as to the strange position from which she had been rescued.

"Tell me how it all occurred, my poor Agnes," he said, at length, "and how it was you came to be in this place, at this hour ? You surely did not meet Hatchitfess of your own accord ?" he added, a little sternly, a dark suspicion flashing through his mind.

"No, I did *not* meet him of my own accord, Mr. Vance," instantly replied Agnes, straightening herself up proudly, and dropping her hold of his arm. "I was returning home from my work, though a little later than usual, for I had been detained, and, unfortunately, passed this way, as it is so much shorter. How could you imagine such a thing of me ?" she continued.

Stopping short, she buried her face in her hands, and again the violent sobs shook her frame.

"I beg your pardon, Agnes, I imagine it no longer. I would never have thought of such a thing, but it has all been so strange. Forgive me, Agnes," he added, taking her arm, and gently drawing her on again. "But, work ! What was it you said about work, Agnes ? What work can you have to do that should so detain you ? Were you visiting a friend in illness, I can imagine nothing else," said Edwin, after a pause, in which he had been reflecting on her reply to him.

"No ! Mr. Vance, it was not that. As I told you, I was returning from my work. The work on which I am now dependent for my bread. I am a dress-maker," answered Agnes quietly.

"A dress-maker! Good gracious! Will you drive me mad Agnes! You are not dependent upon such work, for your support," Edwin exclaimed, impatiently.

"I have not got six hundred dollars a year, or any dollars, save what I can earn for myself. I cannot, and I will not, take your money, Mr. Vance, though I thank you heartily for all your generosity. I prefer to be independent."

"What nonsense, your independence came near costing you very dear this evening, Agnes. The money is yours, and not mine, and take it you must. You cannot help it now, at all events, for the annuity is purchased in your name, for your life, and the money will be paid to you, whether you like it or not. But what in the world is all this?"

They had now approached the gate of the college grounds, with its bright gas lamps, and a singular spectacle met their eyes under the blaze of light.

The wretched Hatchitfess, in an agony of affright and pain, had sped along the road under the enlivening influence of the sounding kick he had received, and in his blind haste had ran full into the arms of a gigantic medical student, very considerably inebriated, who had just entered the gate, and who, now, holding him at arm's length and dangling him like a baby, was apostrophising him in an affectionately maudlin style, for while the powers of his herculean frame did not appear to be impaired by the alcohol he had imbibed, his intellectual faculties were decidedly in an intoxicated condition, as his speechifying testified.

"I say! Hatchy, whas'er marrer? Whas'er marrer with'er nose? Its all bood, I say! Seen ghost'n fell down, eh, Hatchy? Won't wash that. 'Ere's no ghosts. D'ssected lots of f'lers, and never could find any ghosts. No ghosts, I tell yer! Don't squeal, Hatchy! Its your Goochy's got you. Safe now wiz Goochy. Come 'long down town, Hatchy, an' have a little dr

wiz old Gooch. Feel bëzzzer, Hatchy? Wha's marrer with little nose? Wha' broke it?

All this while the unfortunate Hatchitfess was struggling frantically but uselessly in the hands of his huge captor, screaming and imploring to be let go.

"Let me go, Gooch! they're after me, I tell you. I'll be killed if they catch me. There were a thonsand of them kicking me in the park. Let me go, I say! Oh! I'll be murdered, here they come," and yet more frantically he writhed in the grip of Gooch, who, wholly oblivious to his screams and struggles, continued his interrogatories as flowingly as his muddled speech would allow him.

"Been fighting, have you, Hatchy? an' got little nose broke. Never mind! Goochy 'ull give it 'em when they come. Goochy 'ull fix 'em for kicking little Hatchy. Come 'long! I say. Hello! what's the marrer now," as Hatchitfess, seeing the approach of Vance and Miss Seaforth, made a despairing clutch with his nails at Gooch's face and succeeded in tearing off his collar and cravat. "Must'nt scratch, Hatchy, or Goochy 'ull shake you. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," he continued, turning his watery eyes towards Edwin as he came up. "Wha' you want? Little Hatchy's drunk, you see, and got little nose broke. Wha' shall I bezzer do with him, you think?"

"Mr. Gooch! For if I am not mistaken I have the pleasure of addressing that gentleman. This man——"

"Yes'sr; Gooch's my name. Erastus Gooch, T'ronto U'versity. You're Misser Vance, I think, interrupted Mr. Gooch, anxious to do the polite thing.

"Yes! sir; my name is Vance. I am very glad to have met you under these circumstances, as this man Hatchitfess, who is performing such antics in your powerful grasp, has committed a most villainous attempt at the abduction of this young lady in the college grounds just now, with the aid of his cowardly companions, but in which he was happily frustrated by the young

lady's courage and my timely arrival. Might I therefore request you to oblige me by continuing your very capable detention of the scoundrel for a few minutes until I can find an officer to convey him to the police station."

"Wha's this you're telling me, Misser Vance? Little Hatchy's been trying run away with young lady. F'shame! Hatchy, I say. Wha' you'll say to the Beak 'morrer morning. And young lady broke yer little nose, eh! Hatchy. Serve you right, Hatchy. Dirty Hatchy. Bezzer leave young ladies 'lone nex' time; won't do t' get little nose broken and go up befo' Beak."

"That is true! Mr. Gooch," said Edwin, laughing in spite of himself at the absurd scene. "And I propose that the Beak, as you call him, shall teach him a lesson to-morrow. Will you hold him until I can get a police officer."

"Oh! pray don't, Mr. Vance," exclaimed Agnes. "Pray let him go! For my sake! I could not bear to have my name dragged up into court. He has met with some punishment already. Let the wretch go!"

"Tha's so! madam," put in the irrepressible Mr. Gooch. "Got his little nose broke; pretty bad to have his little nose broke by courageous young lady. Boys'll all laugh at him. Let poor devil go! and Goochy 'ull kick him through the college grounds and start him home."

"Well! perhaps it is best so, though the villain deserves a heavier punishment. 'Good evening!' Mr. Gooch, and much obliged to you. You need not kick him, though, unless you wish it very much. Shall we go on, Miss Seaforth?" and without vouchsafing a glance at the wretched Hatchitfess, who still continued his futile efforts to free himself, they proceeded on their way.

"He should not have been allowed to escape so easily, Agnes. I am sorry that you interceded for him, though he is not out of the medical student's hands yet. But you have not told me the

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circumstances of the attack upon you. Have you been annoyed by him before this?" asked Edwin.

"Yes! I have been persecuted by him each time I have met him, in spite of repulse and even insult. I have, however, seen nothing of him for some weeks until he and his man seized me this evening and attempted to force me into the carriage. They had evidently been waiting for me, knowing that I pass through the college grounds, though always in daylight. I remember now that he threatened me the last time I met him, though I made light of it at the time."

"Well! It has become quite certain, my dear Agnes, after this affair, that you must give up this employment, for which you have no necessity; which you have proved to-night to be unsafe for you, and which, pray allow me to observe, only a feeling of false pride compels you to undertake. You are provided for by my father's legacy to you, and you have no necessity for this employment, respectable enough, I have no doubt, but needless on your part. For your own sake, and that of your helpless old aunt, you ought to cast aside the feelings of pride which refuses that which my father owed you, and which he wished to pay you. I cannot feel that I am doing my duty to him, and it is a great unhappiness to me, therefore, that you thus persist in refusing me the opportunity to fulfil my obligation to him. The annuity is yours. I cannot be happy unless you take it, my dear Agnes," said Edwin, and forgetful in his earnestness that he spoke in the public street, he had raised his voice to unnecessary loudness.

Broken faces were to be the order of the day with him, for he had hardly uttered the last words when he received a violent blow on the forehead, almost throwing him backwards, while a voice, familiar enough to him as Reginald Mordaunt's, but distorted with rage into a discordant scream, exclaimed—"You scoundrel! do you dare to flaunt your perfidy in my very face."

SHE MIGHT HAVE DONE BETTER.

"What do you mean by that, Reginald Mordaunt?" he shouted, but Agnes' scream of affright at the sudden assault restrained him, while a gentleman who was passing, and had witnessed the scene, seized the excited Reggie and pushed him violently backwards. A crowd was collecting, and too chivalric to expose his charge to further annoyance, of which she had certainly had sufficient, Vance called a passing coach, followed her into it and gave the order to proceed to Miss Seaforth's home.

"What can he have meant by striking me thus?" he said, audibly, "There is something wrong at Lake Mordaunt or he would never have done such a thing. Whatever can be the matter?" he exclaimed aloud in perturbation and utter bewilderment.

"How horrible! The very streets are not safe. Who is the young ruffian that assaulted you?" said Agnes, gaspingly, for she had been terribly alarmed.

"He is the brother of the young lady whom I am to marry and there is something wrong, I am certain, at Lake Mordaunt. I have felt a presentiment of it all day," replied Edwin, throwing himself back in his seat in despair.

"Brother of the young lady whom you are to marry!" echoed Agnes, in surprise. "Then you are engaged, Mr. Vance. I did not know it, and I congratulate you sincerely, though hardly upon the somewhat unfraternal conduct of your future brother-in-law. Yet the very fact of your engagement may probably explain the affair, for you were talking too earnestly and too interestedly to——" But here Miss Seaforth's speech was arrested; her proud sense of self-respect becoming alive to the repugnant nature of the explanation. "I wish I had known of your engagement," she continued, involuntarily.

"Then you must have forgotten, Agnes, for I told you in my reply to the letter I received from you at Lake Mordaunt."

"But you never answered my letter, Mr. Vance. Or rather, I never received your reply," she continued, correcting herself;

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"and have been aggrieved against you that you did not reply to me under the peculiar circumstances."

"I certainly wrote and sent the letter for mailing with another which, to my own knowledge, reached its destination, for I have heard of it," he replied.

"It is very strange then, that the one to me should have gone wrong, but I am glad of this explanation, for I had, not unnaturally, yet unjustly, it would appear, imputed to you a carelessness as to the cruel state of suspense in which I was placed."

"You may be sure, my dear Agnes, that I never could have been so forgetful of anything in which you were concerned. I shall have this matter enquired into, and shall see you again concerning the affairs to which the letter referred. To-night I cannot. I am too anxious and disturbed," replied Edwin, and they relapsed into silence until the coach stopped at its destination.

"Will you come in, Mr. Vance?" said Miss Seaforth, as they alighted.

"Not to-night, Agnes. I am not fit for anything, and I expect not presentable either, for Reginald's hand is not a light one. The blow, however, affects me more mentally than physically; and I am sick at heart with anxiety. There must be some dreadful, though to me unknown and incomprehensible reason, which prompted the attack."

"I hope—I sincerely hope—and trust that there is no foundation for your fears. The assault upon you was, I suspect, prompted merely by some absurd whim on the part of a very young man. In any event, if you and your betrothed are true of heart to each other, all will come right in the end."

"That something dreadful for me has occurred, I am certain, his very words would shew it, and yet I have given no cause; while of Ethel's sincerity I am as assured as of my own existence. And now I must say 'good night,'" he replied.

"Good night, Mr. Vance," she said. "I cannot express by

words my deep sense of the vast service you have this evening rendered me. It is another to the many obligations I am under to you and the greatest of them all. An obligation that I can never repay, and one which I shall the more willingly owe you that there may ever remain in my heart its deep debt of gratitude. You are a hero to me now—a friend you have ever been.”

“An unwitting hero, then, for I did not know it was you, but certainly your friend,” he replied. “You owe your gratitude to your own courage; the part I had in the battle was very limited—the mere arrival of a reinforcement. But if you choose to consider that worthy of gratitude,” he continued, laughing in spite of himself, “you can very easily wipe out the debt by withdrawing your refusal, an useless refusal now, at all events, to the last wishes of my father, which, as he was your father’s dearest friend, you might well look upon as addressed to a daughter. And now ‘good night,’ dear Agnes.”

He shook her hand as the door opened, and jumping into the cab, was driven home.

The experiences of Mr. Edwin Vance’s day had been at least varied, if they had not been agreeable, and it was in anything but a happy frame of mind that he reached home.

Hastily entering the drawing-room, where a handsome old lady, his mother, sat busily engaged on a piece of light embroidery, and weaving over her permitting occupation a train of the quiet thoughts and soft retrospections that sweeten the hours of age—he bent over her and kissed her with fond affection, as he enquired—

“Any letters for me this evening, mother?”

“How late you are, Edwin! Why, what is the matter with you? You are hurt! Whatever has occurred to you?” she replied, as she looked up at him after her warm motherly kiss.

“Oh! that is nothing! A mere contusion. I’ll tell you of it after, but are there any letters for me?”

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daunt, Edwin, I am sorry to say, for your sake. It is very strange your Ethel does not write to you, but then they live in a country place and letters often miscarry and are delayed," said his mother, watching his troubled face with anxious interest.

"That is true enough, mother, but cannot apply in this case. Something inimical to me has occurred, I am certain. I have had a proof of it to-night. I shall get Ferretout to take charge of my pressing business, and I'll run down to Lake Mordaunt to-morrow evening. I can bear this suspense no longer, and will learn the worst."

"Is that step necessary, Edwin? Are not your fears exaggerating a little delay in receiving a letter?"

"Not so, my dear mother, I wish I could think so; after the occurrence of to-night I can no longer shut my eyes. But let me have a cup of tea, and I'll relate my adventures, and ask your advice and aid in more than this matter, for I have had more than one adventure this evening."

CHAPTER II.

AT THE GATES OF DEATH.

When Ethel Mordaunt awoke to conscious life, and her blue eyes opened again to God's bright sunlight, she found herself lying stretched upon a sofa, in the room where her bitter interview of the morning had taken place, and bending over her, with terrified face, anxiety and fear in every lineament, stood her mother, watching with the intense longing, the fearful suspense that draws out the passing minutes into illimitable periods, in which the dread and horror of years might well be compassed, for the first faint signs of returning life; while, with his finger on her pulse, and his eyes fixed on the dial of his watch, stood Dr. Streatham, his grave face betraying more anxiety than he would have liked to be so plainly visible.

As the trembling lids slowly opened, and the wandering eyes lightened with intelligence, they fixed themselves on the loving face bent over her with such infinite tenderness and a faint smile—the sweet smile of an answering love and recognition—irradiated for a moment the tremulous lips. Feebly and with ineffectual effort she essayed to lift her hand to place it within the tender and comfort-giving grasp of her mother, but upon her lay so unutterable a sense of weakness, of languid weariness and incapability, that the accomplishment of the little movement of affection was impossible to her, and the weakened and nerveless hand would have fallen back to her side had not the anxious perception of the watching mother divined the wish, while the heart, strained during the long hours by its dire forebodings, beat faster with the flush of joy which the little action prompted.

"Thank God! Oh! thank God! She is better. Oh! Ethel, my darling! my first born! You are restored to me. Thank God for all His mercies," and Mrs. Mordaunt, the tears of gladness in her eyes, bent down and kissed her daughter with the long, warm kiss of the mother's heart.

"Dear mamma!" she whispered, as she returned with loving effort the soft embrace. "Have I been ill and frightened you? I'm better now, but I am *so* cold," and as she spoke she shivered from head to foot, although the afternoon was sultry and oppressive as an unclouded summer sun could make it.

"You must get her to bed at once, Mrs. Mordaunt," whispered Dr. Streatham. "She must be kept warm while the attack of shivering is upon her. It will not last long, and will be followed by an accession of fever, slight I trust, but I must warn you that she is not better as yet. Has she received any great mental shock do you know? for, if I understand you aright, she was well enough this morning?"

"I do not think so! To my knowledge nothing has occurred. I found her lying senseless on the floor of this room when

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I came down stairs about noon. I will endeavour to find out, though."

"Do so! if possible, but do not excite or annoy her. She must be kept quiet. I will return this evening, but I must go now. You need not be alarmed, Mrs. Mordaunt, but you must take all care. Good afternoon," and Dr. Streatham took his leave.

For the remainder of the afternoon Ethel lay weak, shivering and torpid, unable to speak or even to think, further than to complain of cold, and in feeble whispers ask for more coverings, though her anxious attendants kept heated blankets constantly wrapped over the shivering form, and tried every appliance their loving sympathy and skill could suggest to chase away the benumbing chill. She was conscious, that was evident, but that was all that could be said, and Mrs. Mordaunt saw that for the present it was utterly futile and worse than useless to think of endeavoring to question her daughter, to get a clue as to the cause of her illness. She was much too anxious also; she recognized the alarming fact that Ethel was ill, the cause of the illness was, for the time, a secondary consideration. That would do when danger was passed. The present moments were for action: to help her suffering child, and not, as she saw it, for mere speculation into the cause of her sufferings.

But at length the fits of shivering ceased. She no longer complained of cold, and gently fell into calm and easy slumber until the evening. She awoke from it feeling brighter and stronger, fully in the possession of all her senses, but flushed and feverish. Instead of the former cold, she now complained of too great heat, and essayed to remove the load of wrappings with which she was encumbered.

Mrs. Mordaunt, only too delighted at the apparent improvement, a heavy incubus removed from her heart, sat down beside her beloved child, eagerly pressing her to partake of some of the dainties that had been prepared for her, hoping and trusting

that the evil and the danger had passed away. But Ethel declined to eat—after vainly attempting, that her mother might be pleased—a morsel of the tempting delicacy before her.

"You are better, my darling child, I think, but I am sorry you cannot eat. Oh! Ethel, I have been so alarmed and anxious. I found you fainting upon the floor. What caused it? Do you remember? Tell me, Ethel, if anything unpleasant has happened to you."

As her mother's words fell upon her ear, the full flood of memory, the bitter tide of recollection, flowed back upon Ethel's soul. Her bright *Past* that had so overwhelmingly sunk into the dark blank of the terrible present. Her hero, for whom her days had brightened—downfallen and lost to her—a broken and defaced image, once so adorable, still so dearly but so bitterly loved, thrown down to earth, and hers no longer.

Her love that had grown with such sweetness and such strength into her daily life, that had taken possession of all her being, its hopes, its joys, its earthly future, budding in scented beauty, the flower of her youth, all changed by dread storms and withering frost, to wreck and devastation—a ceaseless torment, an unending winter, a love shorn of its sweetness, its flowery hope and its beauty. As remembrance bringing back to her the crushing sense of all its happiness for a few brief days, with the splendid charm, wherein her earthly hope, all joy, all aspiration, lay absorbed; of the dire extinguishment that had left her nothing; of the drear years, befogged and clouded, that lay before her, with dripping rains and moaning blasts, all-sorrowful; she turned her pained face, all wrenched in the freshened agony, to her mother, with the gasping cry,

"Don't ask me, mother! Oh! don't ask me! Leave me to my misery. There can be no help!"

"Oh! Ethel! What has come to you?" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, springing up and throwing her arms around her daughter, as if by the protecting shield of a mother's breast she

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could keep away her darling's evil. "Tell me, Ethel! Tell me what is this dreadful thing. There may be help. God can help. He is the help. Oh! Ethel, my poor darling, is it about Edwin Vance? Is all right with him? Oh! tell, me, Ethel!"

"It is all over, mamma! He is false to me," and with a shuddering sob that told too well how the very wording of the thought wrung her heart, she pressed her face closer to her mother's, and together their tears mingled.

"Impossible, Ethel! I cannot believe it. You have been deceived. I would answer for the depth of his love for you," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt.

"It is too true! for I have the proofs," she said, her voice broken by sobs. "Oh! mamma, I am so miserable."

"He dare not do it! He would not do it! for he loves you, Ethel!" said her mother, rising quickly to her feet with the action of her thoughts. "I do not believe it! I cannot believe it! Ethel! Was Emily Dearborn here this morning? I heard one of the girls say something about her being here. Was it from her that this came?"

"Yes, mamma! It was she who brought the fatal letters."

"Then, there is hope still. I would not believe——" but her sentence was arrested by the entrance of Dr. Streatham, shewn up by a maid to the room. With a grave bow to Mrs. Mordaunt he walked up to the bed, looked for a moment at Ethel's flushed and heated face, and, after feeling her pulse, said in a low voice:—

"I must forbid any further conversation, either with Miss Mordaunt or in the room. There must be perfect quiet. Open a window and get the temperature down to sixty, and keep it at that point. I wish to see you, Mrs. Mordaunt," and with these words he withdrew from the room, followed by Mrs. Mordaunt.

Before the morning had dawned, the beautiful Ethel Mordaunt, poor Edwin Vance's sweet love, lay delirious, uncon-

scious and wildly raving under the violent fires of a brain fever.

The strain upon her had been too great. The blow, roughly and cruelly struck at her pure affections, had been more than she could bear. Her refined and elevated mental organization that held the Good so immeasurably apart from the Evil—that endowed the loved object with the ennobled attributes of its own high ideal, had been too severely shocked by the illimitable descent to falsehood, baseness and cruelty.

Ethel Mordaunt was very ill. For many weary days she lay on the dread brink of the valley of the shadow of Death. Day after day passed and still the same ceaseless delirium, unmitigated and unchecked, the disease running its course with unabated violence, while the poor sufferer wasted away beneath its consuming breath.

On the morning of the tenth day of the illness, Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt, for the first time since its commencement, met to take their breakfast together.

"You down to breakfast, Florence; there must be good news then. How is our poor darling this morning?" said the former, as his wife entered the room.

"She is asleep—the first time for days. When she awakes in all probability we will know, my dear husband, whether our daughter will be spared to us, or whether God will take her to himself. Oh! that it be His good Will that she be granted to us."

"She is young and strong and we have every reason to hope. God grant her to us! Life would be very bitter if Ethel were taken from us. How is Ally this morning?" said Mr. Mordaunt.

"Much the same! Well, apparently, were it not for that unabated drowsiness. I do not like it, and yet it may be only weakness. Dr. Streatham is treating her still, but he says nothing about her, and his reticence alone alarms me. Ethel's

more alarming illness has too much distracted me from poor little Alida," replied Mrs. Mordaunt. "I wish Reggie were here. It is so strange that the message could not find him."

"I ordered a messenger to follow him into the woods with the last telegram. He will be here in a few days, at all events. Horton I cannot hear from. He is not at home, nor do they know whither he had gone. There is another thing which should be attended to at once. Vance should be written to ; it is not fair to him, in any case. If innocent, it is most cruel to leave him in ignorance, and I certainly do not believe him guilty. Some devilish machination of that detestable Dearborn girl is at the bottom of the affair. You should write to Vance. You will do it better than I could."

"I cannot write to the man ; it is impossible. So far as we know at present, he is the direct cause of our darling's danger, and deserves no consideration from us. If he is innocent—which is very doubtful—for Ethel told me the day before she was taken ill that she had proofs, certain proofs of his guilt—why should we harrow his feelings ?" answered Mrs. Mordaunt, decisively.

"Proofs can be manufactured, my dear Florence, and Miss Emily Dearborn is capable of anything. Certainly his two letters, which I took the liberty of opening, since Ethel's illness, bear no evidence of guilt about them. They breathe the most devoted love, and he will get so anxious at not hearing that we may expect him at any moment."

"Well ! He had better not come, unless he brings his vindication with him. I shall not see him, at all events," said Mrs. Mordaunt, and the conversation closed.

But Ethel was not then to die. It was otherwise willed. Her earthly probation was not passed. For her this world, with its pleasures and its pains, its lights and its shadows, its vain affections and its hollow joys, was not yet to cease to be. To her the lesson was still to come, the bitter knowledge, born of the

painful years, the lesson which to bright and hopeful youth is so hard to learn—that all of this life is vanity, the vanity of vanities.

That, based on things of this world, happiness cannot be secured. The dearest hope, the proudest ambition, the fondest love, the tender ties of unselfish affection, power, pomp and riches, as a dream dissolve, even when most they seem secure. A bitter void to mark that such had been.

But not all bitter. One half the sum of human life is happiness, pure and unalloyed. Such may not so appear to us, for pleasure is not counted as is the pain—it leaves not the same strong impression upon the mind. Who that has revelled in the priceless joy that exists for him in his little child, counts that joy when his heart is wrenched with agony at its loss? We look upon it that we are entitled to the happiness, and are hardly used when we are called upon to bear the pain. Life is not all bitter if we are content to accept the bitter as we enjoy the sweet.

When Ethel awoke from her calm slumber the feared crisis had passed. The fever that had raged in her veins so fiercely and so long had left her, but it left her worn by its fires to the verge of dissolution. Weak, wasted, nerveless and scarce alive; for hours her life hung trembling on a point; undecided to mortal eye the battle between death and struggling existence. But at length the anxious parents received from the physician's grave lips the joyful assurance that the worst danger had passed away.

Days of anxious care and unremitting attention must elapse before she would be safe, but the grim shadow of Death no longer hung over their fearful hearts. Their child had come back to them from the very confines of the grave, and the hours were to them a thankful joy. How sweet for them to watch, as the hours flew on, the fluttering life strengthening little by little the beloved form. The beloved form which with

dread horror and fear they had been forced to picture to their shuddering hearts as but too probable in a few short days would lie enshrouded in the silent tomb—gone from their eyes for this earthly for-ever.

To Ethel herself, lying in the unutterable languor of her weakness was mercifully spared the sense of the great sorrow that had fallen upon her. For her there were yet no remembrances to torture, no sorrows to grieve. A dreamy mist enveloped her wakened consciousness, the pleasant listlessness that asked not thought or motion. To her it was enough that her languid eye could rest on her mother's face as she sat in her patient watches before her; enough to answer with faint but sweet smile her mother's loving gaze bent so often in anxious care upon her. But though her convalescence was slow, it surely progressed. Little by little her strength came back to her, and all fears were at rest. The stern prohibitions of silence and absolute quiet were by-and-by removed, but all exciting topics were to be forbidden in the sick-room.

She began to speak and take interest in the little things of her past daily life; her flowers, her birds, her favorites of the barn-yard, but made no attempt to refer to her engagement, or its unhappy end. She asked for her brother, Reggie, but Reggie had not come home, though a fortnight had passed since he had been telegraphed for, the day after her illness had commenced, and letters, without number, had been sent to every place likely to find him.

However, the succeeding afternoon brought the wanderer back. He drove up in excited haste, almost frenzied with anxious fears. His mother had enough to do to get down-stairs on hearing his voice in the hall, and keep him from making his hurried way to the sick room. He had met the messenger bearing his father's telegram as he was returning with his college friends from a shooting excursion far into the woods, and had started home with the utmost speed that steam could carry

him, almost frantic with grief and fear that he might, from the long delay, see his sister no more. He had received, on arrival at Hamilton, the first letter sent him with the few particulars of Ethel's illness, and its cause.

But his mind made easy by the joyful news that Ethel was over her dreadful illness, his thoughts took a new direction, and flew with fierce indignation against the unhappy Edwin Vance, the hated cause of all this misery. And he had a story to tell his mother, which was conclusive against that unlucky individual. Conclusive to Mrs. Mordaunt's mind, its details, confirming with startling force the few words she had heard from Ethel. A foregone conclusion with Reggie, to whom anything emanating from Emily Dearborn, carried perfect conviction ; his story was only an additional evidence, a further proof of his fair one's immaculateness, and he told it to his father and mother with the hotter indignation against poor Edwin Vance, that he should not have to think treason against that immaculateness. To him it was very plain that Vance was guilty, for did not Emily Dearborn avouch that guilt, and in his version there lay the unconscious vein of exaggeration, which is drawn upon so naturally, yet so heavily, by a narrator, to make his tale as effective as possible to the listener's ears.

"I arrived in Toronto," he said, "too late for the afternoon train for the east, and had to wait four hours for the next ; a special with the mails for England. This opportunity was a great relief to me, in my anxiety and impatience, as otherwise I should have to wait until the morning. But even this brief delay was torment to me. I was in a fever of restlessness, as you may suppose, and could not remain quiet in any one place for a moment, for I would have to think of poor Ethel's illness, and that I could not bear to do. So to pass away the time as easily as possible, and keep my attention distracted, I had nothing left but to roam about the streets until train-time should arrive. But even constant movement amid the busy throngs and

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stirring life of the city, could not allay the fevered impatience of my thoughts. I hated the smiling faces around me, for the smiles that so illy-consorted with my own miserable suspense. I hated myself that I was among them ; that I was there at all, when I should have been at home ; or that I should have placed myself, through that abominable hunting party, so far out of reach that my sister might, even then, for all I knew, have passed away. I was not in a fit mood to encounter that which now came across me. The letter I had received that morning had given me the first intimation of the real cause of Ethel's illness, and with its bitter impression fresh upon me, you can easily imagine the sensations with which I perceived, almost upon me, as I chanced to lift my eyes to his face, the perfidious scoundrel, whose base treachery had brought down the evil upon us, smilingly advancing, with the girl for whom our poor Ethel was sacrificed, clinging lovingly upon his arm ; her eyes eagerly turned to his, as she listened, with excited face, to the villain's soft declarations—

“ ‘ This heart is yours. I cannot be happy without you, my darling Agnes.’ ”

“ I heard the scoundrel's very words, as they approached. Flesh and blood could not stand it. I heard this from the man for whom my beautiful sister lay on her death-bed at that very moment. Uttering them, too, the hateful villain, all reckless, and uncaring for the ruin he had caused.

“ The words had hardly passed his lips, when I had struck him in the face and knocked him off the curb into the roadway. That is all I saw afterwards, for a gentleman passing seized me and pushed me back, and when I escaped, they had disappeared. But that little scene, I should imagine, should be amply sufficient to convince the most sceptical as to what manner of man is Mr. Edwin Vance, and forms a striking corollary to the statements adduced by Miss Dearborn, to whom, for her brave aid in unmasking a villain, our thanks should be due, in

place of suspicion of her motives, and disbelief in the plain facts she brought forward, which some of us seem inclined to foster."

And, as Reggie said these last words, he looked at his father.

"Whose judgment has not been blinded, Reginald, you might have added," replied Mr. Mordaunt, quietly. "Another thing, I must remark, in connection with the story I have just heard, is also not to your credit. That a son of mine should have shown himself so wanting in the spirit of a gentleman, as to attack, under what provocation soever, the escort of a lady, passes my belief. An assault the more cowardly, as retaliation, under the circumstances, would be impossible. In this instance, at any rate, Mr. Vance shewed himself to be a gentleman, which, I am sorry to think, you did not, Reginald. I am inclined to think, also, that the person, whose control over his passions can so little be depended upon, is no more to be depended upon for the accuracy of description of a scene, evidently viewed through the exaggerating medium of such unbridled rage. Were these words which you ascribe to Mr. Vance, the very words he used, neither more or less, and without the hostile colouring of your own mind?"

"You are very hard upon me, father. Why should I wish to give a false colouring to them? What I overheard was little enough for the purpose, I should think," answered Reggie, flushing with vexation at his father's reprimand.

"Too few! It is quite possible that if you had heard more, the meaning would have appeared in a very different light to you. I wish to know if these words, as given by you, were exactly as he used them?"

"Well, yes; that is, I think so. If not his exact words, something very like them," replied Reggie, with some hesitation, and sulkily enough.

"Something very like them, you think? Or, very unlike them, for all you know. By your own shewing, you were not in a con-

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dition to coolly understand that which you heard and saw. You are not even sure of the words, and have certainly placed yourself in a false position ; simply made yourself ridiculous."

"I think, my dear, that you are a little unjust to Reggie," said Mrs. Mordaunt to her husband. I acknowledge that he was very much in the wrong to interfere in the manner he did ; to soil his fingers on the wretch. But I think it highly probable that he gives us a true version of what passed. To my mind it proves the truth of everything alleged against Mr. Vance, even though Emily Dearborn, for no good motive, it is true, brought the matter forward."

"Tut, tut, Florence, don't jump to your conclusions so hastily. From what I know of Edwin Vance, from all I have seen of his character, and of his strong devotion to Ethel, you cannot expect me to believe that he was making love to this young lady, whoever she may be. Such is by no means probable. You must remember, too, that Vance has most culpably been left in ignorance of Ethel's illness, and that he should be escorting a young lady through the streets, or even conversing with her in an animated manner, is surely no great crime ; certainly not one to have brought down upon him this savage attack, which I bitterly regret. The more I think of the matter, the more I am convinced that the whole affair is a scheme to ruin Ethel's happiness on the part of that very clever, but thoroughly detestable young lady—Emily Dearborn, and such, sooner or later, it will turn out to be," said Mr. Mordaunt, who, as he concluded, rose to leave the room.

"It's a shame ! I declare, a burning shame that Emily Dearborn should be spoken of in such terms. She's utterly incapable of that which you lay to her charge. What has she ever done that she should be treated as she is, and hated as she is by everyone here ?" exclaimed the rash Reggie, with flushed face and excited eye, as he sprung from his seat, and rushed out of the house.

"Stay, Reginald!" sternly said his father, but in vain, for the impulsive and headstrong young fellow had placed himself out of hearing.

"I should expect trouble then," continued Mr. Mordaunt, "did I not think that Miss Dearborn is too ambitious, too knowing altogether, to marry a boy like him, with his own way to make in the world, and nothing but expectations. He will soon grow out of it, too. I shall have a serious talk with him when he returns."

Mrs. Mordaunt had felt more alarm than her husband, from Reggie's open outburst. Her mother's pride would not allow her to think that Emily would not be only too happy to marry her handsome young son; she considered that the young lady was quite astute enough to know that even if the marriage would be a very bitter cup for the parents' drinking, yet it would, for their son's sake, be forgiven, and Reggie's heritage but little endangered. But she said nothing further, and with an anxious heart went to her daughter's room,

During the afternoon, Ethel, who had sufficiently regained her strength to sit, supported up with pillows, upon the bed, and whose sorrowful face shewed that with her improved health, her sorrow had come back to her, turned to her mother, and said—

"Mamma, please bring me my writing desk. I wish to write a letter."

"Oh! Ethel, are you able to do it?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, looking up quickly, as the sad voice reached her. "Are you well enough yet for the excitement? It isn't to him, is it, Ethel?"

"Yes, mamma; I must write to him. I am well enough; I shall feel better that it is done. He loves me, I know, and I—Oh, God help me!—I love him but too well. But it is all over, and the sooner he's told, the better," said poor Ethel.

Lifting her thin fingers to her white, fever-wasted face, she burst into a passion of tears.

"Ethel! My poor, ill-used darling! Do not give way like this," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, running over to her daughter, and throwing her arms about the weeping figure. "He is not worthy of a tear. Do not excite yourself, Ethel, or you will be ill again. For my sake, Ethel; for all our sakes!"

"Yes, mamma; I shall be better directly, and you shall not see me give way again. But it is so dreadful, and I was so happy," said Ethel, between her sobs. "You must let me write my letter, and be done with it all. I will then have nothing to do but look my life straight in the face!"

"You are not well enough, yet, Ethel. Let him wait for his letter; I suppose he will be only too glad to be freed. Let him wait," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, indignantly.

"No, dear mamma, let me write my letter. He will not be glad, for he loves me. But his love belongs to another, and it is all over."

"The villain! to bring his treacherous love to your happy, young life. We very nearly lost you, Ethel," said Mrs. Mordaunt, unable to control the bitterness of her feelings, as she thought of the sorrowful years lying before her daughter; the years whose prospect had been so bright.

"No, mamma, he is not a villain. I could not have loved a villain! He may have been wrong and cruel in keeping back that which should have been made open; for loving me when it was not competent for him; for deceiving me into loving him. But not a villain."

"Then, Ethel, if it is that he loves you, and you love him, you must not give him up. Your happiness must come first. Write your letter, and bring him to your side," said Mrs. Mordaunt, whose thoughts had carried her into an intolerable future of misery for her Ethel, a future to be averted by any possible means. "Your father, Ethel, will not believe in Mr. Vance's guilt; he maintains that it is all a plot of Emily Dearborn's to separate you. It may be so, but he has not seen the letters

you spoke of to me, which prove his falsity. Where are they? I have never seen them yet."

"That one which was written by him to that girl, I tried to tear up, in my agony, but could not; the other, I have, but I do not remember where. But papa is wrong—there can be no doubt. Though Emily Dearborn hates me, her proofs were all convincing. I could never take the love which belongs of right to another. Let me write my letter, mamma," continued poor Ethel, her mouth quivering at her sad recollections.

The letter was written; written with the feeble and trembling hand that had been down almost to death's door, that it had become necessary to write it. Its thoughts—the pale flashings of a brain which had so lately waked almost from the last long sleep—few and simple. Its words, few and simple, also, were the death of hope to the heart from whence they sprung; a sad ending that was all unending—ending as to life's bright hopes—unending as to life-long drear memory. The faint and irregular characters—changed, as was all changed that belonged to Ethel Mordaunt—carried in their blurred weakness their own pathos, and, if a tear had not blotted the page, it was not that they had not fallen, but had not been let to fall upon it.

"LAKE MORDAUNT, Sept. 30th, 1873.

SIR,—All is ended between us. All has been made known to me. When you receive this, you will be again *free*. Free in so far as I am concerned, and free to return to her, to whom your love is due. Why did you come to me with your cruel love? Did you expect that it would be so easily the same with me, as it was before?

I have been very ill, or you would have heard from me sooner. I send your ring, letters, &c., which have not been mine. Which ought never to have been made supposable to me to be mine. Why should you have so deceived me? You are to blame. In that, all cannot be wiped away, as is your engagement with

ETHEL MORDAUNT.

EDWIN VANCE, ESQ."

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Poor Ethel addressed and sealed her letter, though with trembling hands, while her tearful eyes and quivering lip attested that, though the will was firm to act, it was very bitter to have to act.

"Will you let me see it, Ethel?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, with a voice that quivered as mournfully as did her daughter's.

"No, mamma. I would rather not, if you do not care much," responded Ethel, in the gentle sad tone which her voice had of late assumed, so pitiful to hear. "All is ended, but I would rather you did not see it."

"My poor darling! Your grief is sacred to me. It was thoughtless in me to ask it," returned her mother. "It is all so cruel, so cruelly hard to you, but God in His good time will send His helping strength, and I shall see my own bright happy Ethel again."

"Never the same again, I fear, mamma, but I will strive to be happy, if I can, with His good help."

She then took off her ring, which had remained on her finger through all her illness, gazed at it for a few moments, kissed it again and again. "My love faileth not," she repeated. "But oh! how his has failed for me."

She handed it with her letter to her mother. "You will find in my little cabinet all his presents, and his letters in this writing desk; put them up together this evening for me, mamma, please, and send them to him. I could not bear to do it myself."

Ethel Mordaunt—the bright, the happy and the beautiful—ended thus, wasted by sickness and worn in spirit, beautiful still, but with the mournful touching beauty, that when it drapes with pale flowers the fresh bright garlands of youth tells the sad tale that has already come home, the bitter finding that the joyous hopes of the beautiful earth are but the mockeries of a dream; ended thus her first bright dream, and from her pillow

watered the beaten down and sodded grave of her brief love with fast falling tears.

CHAPTER II.

EMILY'S PATH TO SAFETY.

Miss Emily Dearborn, very contrary to her expectations, derived but little satisfaction from the success of her scheme against the happiness of Ethel Mordaunt. In place of the harvest of exultant triumph she had promised to herself, as she prepared her sowing of malice and falsehood, she had as yet reaped but a bitter crop of mortification, while ready to her hand had sprung up a heavy aftergrowth of uneasiness and sense of personal danger : for had not she been almost directly accused of forging the letters by Ethel Mordaunt herself, and had they not been retained by her avowedly to bring the authorship to light. Where was her triumph?

Instead of seeing her crushed to the ground by the blow, bowed down with grief and humiliation, had not her hated enemy told her that she did not believe a word of her evidence ; that in all likelihood she had forged it herself, and it should be brought home to her. As day after day flew by her thoughts, ever bent on the one theme of fear, morbidly pictured to her mind the slow linking together of the chain that was to bind her down to disgrace, and worse still—a prison.

“What a fool I was ! How could my usual cool judgment so desert me that I should have written that hateful letter ? What insanity possessed me to use the real name of the old aunt which Sidney sent me ? And slandering the niece, too, as I did. It will be bad enough if the Mordaunts discover the imposition. Bad enough the shame and disgrace, though that I might possibly brazen out. But if it should come to the ears of that Seaforth girl or her aunt, I may look for no mercy, and the terrors of the criminal law are before me. Something must be done, and that, too, quickly.”

As Emily's soliloquy thus defined it, she had found her Nemesis in her fears. Already from the morbid terrors of her mind had sprung the Avenger; lashing her with her own tormenting thoughts from which, day or night, there was no escape.

Always present! goading her with the stinging remembrance of the fatal error of her work—the fatal miscalculation—the too confident boldness which gave to her enemies the clue which led to her guilty self; spreading before her the frightful vision of the grated cell; the crowded court room, in which stood the convicted forger and slanderer—in shame before the world—herself.

Always present—the stern Avenger. In driving ashore the bark of other's happiness, what fearful shipwreck had she brought to her own.

And there was no softening repentance to allay the hard torment of her spirit; no search of forgiveness for her sin—whence cometh help; no thought of reparation to the injured—in which hidden lay safety and peace.

No! In such ideas her tortured mind, intent on her personal security only, did not seek its refuge. The gulf that stretched between the good refuge and her evil had become too broad for her wordly eyes to recognize the port of safety.

"But something must be done, and that, too, quickly." But what was to be done? To whom should she turn? She had not dared to let her visit to Ethel Mordaunt or its purport be known to any of those surrounding her. Instead of returning from that visit with the self-satisfied smirk of triumph on her smiling face—the "I told you how it would be" upon her lips, as she had exultantly anticipated, she sneaked back discomfited to her father's house and sought to cover up her tracks with ignominious silence. Even though she knew that, whether or no Ethel Mordaunt's engagement were broken, her connection with the attempt must sooner or later come to light, yet she dared not anticipate the disclosure. She was alone with her guilt and

her fears, with none to whom she could look for aid : if indeed she desired such—unlikely enough for Emily Dearborn, even in her pressing strait.

As it appeared to her own mind, her strait was a pressing one.

When, after the lapse of some days, the news of Ethel's dangerous illness reached her ears, with the exaggeration, usual in such cases, that her recovery was impossible, her fears swelled to a culmination ; for she was well aware that Edwin Vance, in the event of a fatal termination, would leave no stone unturned to clear up the matter, for the sake of his own good name as well as to punish the guilty party who had brought a disaster so horrible upon him. And, again, matters were too quiet at Lake Mordaunt—suspiciously quiet. Notwithstanding that her ears were always open to such news, not a word had reached her as to the ending of her engagement. It might not have been ended, and, in such case, the greater danger was presaged to herself.

In whatsoever light she viewed the matter, and her reflections upon it were increasing, her guilty fears saw nothing but menacing danger ahead. At length the wearing anxieties of the position became almost unendurable ; her spirit, her ambitious plans, and her sarcastic temper even, had all melted away before her selfish fears for herself. She would have adopted almost anything with the appearance of feasibility to have freed herself from the incubus that oppressed her. But not a light could she discern in her mental prospect. Not a glimmer of hope to be derived from any plan she could conceive.

The two fatal letters were in the possession of the enemy, and she could imagine no possible means to recover them. Until they were again in her own hands, she felt herself in danger.

Even Reggie, her admiring young lover, had deserted her to all appearance, for a fortnight and more had elapsed since his

sister's illness, and he had not come near her, though he certainly, she thought, must be at Lake Mordaunt.

"There is a way!" she suddenly exclaimed, springing up from the sofa on which, reclining, she had been pondering over her difficulties. "A clear way! An open way for me, and triumph also. If he were but here. But I can bring him back to me," she continued. "No matter what pressure is forced upon him against me. A word! and he is here. I'll drop a note to him, at the Lake, at once.

As she set about this task, a ring came to the door, and in another moment Mr. Reginald Mordaunt was ushered into the drawing-room beside her.

"Good evening, Emily! How do you do? It's a long time since I've seen you, and I suppose you did not expect me to-day. I only returned to Lake Mordaunt this afternoon," he said, as he shook her hand with lingering pressure.

"You only returned to-day. Well! you are very good to come to see me so soon, and I'm delighted. But how is dear Ethel?" responded the young lady—her delight at his appearance real enough.

"Oh! she is getting better fast, but has had a terrible illness. She is out of danger though, I am happy to say. Poor little Ally's not at all well, though, and my mother is alarmed about her," replied Reggie.

"You are as lovely as ever, my beautiful Emily," he continued, his love-sick young eyes fixed upon her face.

"Ally ill too. How strange! What is the matter with her?" exclaimed Emily. "I never heard of it," she continued, and her danger-haunted brain brought her torment back to her, as she reflected how unlikely the succeeding illness was to be a mere coincidence. "No!" she thought to herself, "Ethel's illness, in all probability, was not caused by mental shock from her lover's falsity. It is a mere contagious disease, or why is little Ally ill also? The engagement is not broken off, and my

danger is all the greater. Vance will see the letters, and instant discovery results."

"Is poor little Alida dangerously ill?" she continued aloud.

"My mother thinks so, but to me she is only feverish and sleepy. I hope nothing is wrong with the little darling, though," he returned.

"But, Emily, I have been a long time away; have you nothing kinder for me than a formal hand-shake?"

"There take your kiss. I suppose I must not refuse you now that we are engaged, even though our engagement promises to be so very protracted."

"Yes! Confound it!" he replied. "If the length of our engagement has to depend on my father's consent, it will be long enough. But it shall not depend upon that. I don't see why it is they should hate you as they do, my darling. I don't see what you have done to cause their unreasonable dislike. Even Ethel too! And I love you so dearly. They ought for my sake to——"

"Yes! It has made me very miserable, Reginald," she interrupted. "I am sure I have done nothing to cause their dislike, unless it is that I love you so well," answered the fair Emily in sorrowful tone. "And dear Ethel I suppose hates me now that I undertook the very disagreeable task, which nothing but true friendship for her would have induced me to accept of opening her eyes to her lover's falsity. It is very hard upon me."

"It is a shame and a disgrace, and most cruel in them all. I will not stand it longer," replied Reggie, with heartfelt indignation at his fair love's well simulated distress.

"My own Reggie! much as it pains me to say it, I can see nothing for us, under the circumstances, than to break off this engagement. It cannot end happily for us. My parents will never give their consent to the marriage, unless your father and mother freely accord theirs also, and of that there seems to be

no prospect. Better for us then, at any rate for the present, to give up the idea and separate, though it is very hard," said the perfidious Emily, as, bringing her face down into her hands, she burst into a flood of tears.

"No ! No ! A thousand times no !" ejaculated the excited Reginald. "That will never do. How could you speak of such a thing, Emily ? Anything but that."

"It will be better, Reggie. Better for us both ; but oh ! it is very hard. Why should fortune be so very unkind to us ? It is cruel ! cruel !" sobbed the tearful Emily, raising her eyes, glistening with their pearly drops, to her young lover's face.

"I will never resign you, Emily, my own beautiful love. never ! For I know now that you really love me. It would be destruction to me ; I could not live without you. Oh ! Emily, let us help ourselves, now ! at once ! Why should we not be married at once ; even without the consent which our parents cruelly withhold from us ? Without delay, Emily, without a day's delay ?" exclaimed the frantic young man, lured on by the syren's mock tears to his ruin.

"Oh, Reggie, impossible ! I could not ! I could not ! And what could we do ?"

"You can do it, Emily. It's not impossible ! It's feasible enough !" he responded, energetically. "When once we are married, and it is irrevocable, my father and mother will not long stand out against us. I am too much to them for that—their only son. They may be angry for a few days, but they love me too well to hold out against my happiness, and, when they know her properly, they will be proud of their beautiful new daughter."

"If I could but think so," she said, softly and then she continued—

"But how are we to be married ? You could not get a license here, without discovery ?"

"You consent then, Emily ?" he joyfully exclaimed. "Oh !

how happy you make me. Never mind the license. We will go to a distance, or cross over to the States, no license is needed there. But when shall it be, Emily? When can you get away?"

"Oh, Reggie! I'm afraid its very rash of us. However am I to get away?"

"Now, Emily, you've consented, and its all easy enough. If you go out for a walk after breakfast, to-morrow morning, at ten o'clock, I'll meet you with a pair of our horses and a carriage, at the junction of the Cascade's roads. We'll catch the two o'clock down-train, cross over to Rochester, or Oswego, and then, my darling, we'll be married at once—to-morrow evening—and our happiness firmly secured for ever! Will you be ready, my own beautiful bride?"

"Oh, Reggie! Reggie! It is very wrong of us, I fear. But I love you so dearly, and my heart would break to lose you. Yes! I will be ready," responded Emily, her bird so well limed that she did not care to give herself further trouble to produce affected hesitation.

"You must be very good to me, Reggie, for I give up parents, friends, everything, for you," she continued, with soft appealing in her lovely eyes.

"My darling! my own love! Who, that has not a heart of stone, could be other, Emily? If you could but know how happy you have made me. To-morrow, you will be my wife. I can hardly realize my perfect bliss."

"I am as happy as you can be, Reggie; if only to-morrow were safely passed," she answered him. "But you mustn't stay here longer to-night. We must avoid all suspicion, and I must get ready. Good night, Reggie, my husband, soon to be," and after a highly dramatic parting, too sweet for transcription, Mr. Reginald Mordaunt, full of illusory bliss, wended his way homewards.

And this was Emily's escape from her difficulties. Hunted,

hounded, hard-driven by her fears ; her cool judgment subverted, her proud ambition degraded by the wearing mental torture of a few days, to the seeking of a temporary safety, from its sin-imagined danger ; a superb intellect, which, had its aims been as pure as they were powerful, could have commanding power, lending itself to the day's expediency ; brought down from its etherial heights to the grovelling terrors that her sin had induced. Could it be said that to Emily Dearborn her Nemesis had not come ? To marry Reggie Mordaunt, a mere boy, scarcely out of his teens, whom she did not love, whose worldly wealth—to the Emily Dearborn of a few days ago so great a consideration—lay in his expectations solely. The expectations of an only son, it is true, and of wealthy parents, but wholly dependent on the will of those wealthy parents, who hated her with good reason ; hated her, and to whom the marriage of their son would be a hard thing to forgive. Such was Emily Dearborn's alternative—the Hobson's choice left to her—or the imagined prison.

But this alliance into the family of the Mordaunt's would secure her from the chief menace of the evils she had brought down upon herself, for it was not to be supposed that any other result could follow the unguineness of those fatal letters than the suppression of such damaging evidence against one so very closely connected with themselves as Reggie's wife ; and, further, the enquiry into the matter would of necessity be much more cautiously conducted, if not stayed altogether, from the danger of scandal it might create. It was quite clear to her that neither Ethel, her parents, or even Vance, would allow the letter, which libelled Agnes Seaforth so atrociously, to reach her, or her aunt's cognizance. To her the marriage would be the ending of her tormenting fears.

But what had become of her darling aims—the ambitious hopes nurtured with so unwavering persistency ever since she had been capable of thinking for herself—of the wealth, social

distinction and power which her beauty was to command for her through a rich marriage ?

For this marriage with Reggie was not a rich one. For many years to come in all probability it could not be, and the brightest days of her life would have to be passed without those things which she so much coveted.

What had come to her that all her aspiring plans—for whose successful pursuit she knew herself so well fitted—were so suddenly ended, that she rushed into a marriage looked upon merely as a 'dernier resort'—or at best, to become a match for her consideration if it were likely that the heir should come into his heirship ?

A few days of wearing mental torment—a few days of guilty fears had dissipated all into thin air—save the frantic desire to save herself from the dangers which the stern Nemesis of her sin held up in frightful aspect before her cowering vision.

But although in these things Emily Dearborn might be changed, she was still Emily Dearborn, and this marriage into the family of the Mordaunts contained an element of sweetness for her that it would be so very bitter to them. Triumph in the thought that she, whom these people so hated ; to whom she was so unutterably intolerable ; whom she had injured and through whom, they would have to look away, in their very midst, the ghastly skeleton of her crime and their great wrong ; who would, in spite of themselves, as the wife of their only son, and brother, be one of themselves, a Mordaunt, an important personage to their future.

The mortification and dismay ; the agony, and grief with which the news of the morrow's event would be received by them, she pictured to herself with malicious delight.

What a victory to her would be the prospect of the hard battle between their loathing dislike of her and their love for Reggie ; the striving for conquest over themselves for his sake,

against the shuddering memory of their bitter wrong and the disgrace of his wife.

"I shall, at all events be safe ; and, though my sphere be more limited, yet it has possibilities. I shall fight within my own lines, for objects that are, too, very desirable, for attainment. Reggie is well enough, and at any rate he is the dearly loved only son. I can play my cards—and have I not my triumph over Ethel and all of them ?" Saying this to herself she went to her own chamber, to secretly make her preparations for the morrow.

* * * * *

Mr. Reginald Mordaunt, wending his way home in his fool's paradise was compelled nevertheless to bring his thoughts down from their heights of bliss to certain sublunary considerations.

It may be easy enough, supposing the lady is agreeable, to arrange an elopement, and it doubtless may be very pleasant so to do, but to get through with it ; do the actual running away ; get the marriage performed in the strange land, and be happy according to programme, requires the considerations of hard worldly matters of fact.

An elopement with a stylish young lady is an event which may naturally be expected to kick up a tremendous dust, and the gentleman concerned will find it necessary to observe an indispensable preliminary requisite ; to wit—raising the wind. Of this startling fact Mr. Reginald Mordaunt suddenly became conscious ere he had reached the paternal mansion.

There was a predicament ! He had something about a hundred dollars in his possession, and he was to run away with, and be married to a very divine creature—of gorgeous tastes—this next morning ; a very small puff of wind that, to the spiced, yet powerful, gale of Araby that should fill his sails when shaping his course for the port of Hymen, where banners wave and streamers fly, regardless of expense.

During the sweetness of that happy '*tête-à-tête*' with his Emily, when the voyage of rapture was so charmingly inaugurated, his soul had been above the base and paltry ideas of dollars and cents. But he thought of them now though ; and very stubborn facts indeed he found them.

Very stubborn facts when one has not a sufficiency of them in one's pocket, though how facile and consonant to one's wishes when once they are safely conjoined into that magic receptacle.

But in the few moments left him, to call up the witches, collect the newt's eyes, the toad's teeth, dead men's fingers, and the other desirable ingredients for simmering the broth that should evolve the charm for him, the charm which should raise the wind as it should be raised, required prompt and effectual measures, and Reggie was not very long in deciding upon the course to be pursued.

Of course his father must raise the wind for him. His thoughts turned to that question at once. But there were difficulties in the way. Although Reggie had always been very liberally supplied with money, he was well aware that in asking for the comparatively large amount his new-born necessities compelled—questions would be asked, which might not be very convenient for him to answer ; and as it was obviously impossible that he could explain the real object for which he required the money, it was equally manifest that he must assign that which was unreal.

He must deceive his father.

The sad consequence of the committal of one wrong act is that it necessitates and makes so easy, the committal of many others that follow in its train.

And Reggie was even already to prove the truth of this.

As he pondered and wondered how his aim should best be accomplished, a thought, which a few days ago would have been

to him impossible, took possession of his brain and as it conveyed the pleasant idea of feasibility, it remained a fixity.

"The money I must have—and that's the very idea that will procure it. But it's a great shame to tell him such a whopper ; and to use such deception too. I cannot help it though. He'll feel more about that than the other ; and no wonder. But the money I must have to-night," saying which Reggie entered the house and sought his father's presence.

He found him alone in the drawing-room, seated at a table ; engaged in reading. As Reggie entered he raised his eyes from his book and said gently,

"Where have you been all the evening ? Reggie."

"I have been out ! Sir ; and have brought you your letters," was the response.

"Then you have been at Ten Lakes," and Mr. Mordaunt looked inquisitively at his son.

"Yes ! I have been at Ten Lakes," was the reply. "But I wish to speak to you, father" and Reggie seated himself opposite, but kept the lamp between himself and his father.

"Well ! what is it ? Reggie ; I am not engaged at present."

"I have been thinking over the matter of which you spoke to me, father, this afternoon ; and have come to the conclusion that in order that it may be possible for me to fulfil that which you wish, I must get away from home and this neighbourhood as soon as I can do so. To remain here, will simply result in my failure to do that which you so desire. Therefore it is better for me to go away at once. That I may obey you, I feel that such is the best course, and I wish it myself ; that I may obey you. Not though that I think I am in the wrong in my affection for Emily Dearborn, nor do I give it up. I do the best I can to meet your wishes by leaving this vicinity for a time.

"Ethel is better, and out of danger, so that there is nothing to require my presence here. I wish to go to Hamilton again,

until it is time to go back to college. Is this agreeable to you? father?"

"Well! Reggie. In so far as my wishes are concerned, I should of course have wished you to stay with us until the term opens. It would be so much pleasanter to us all. But as you think it is the easier for yourself, I certainly cannot object and that which you have told me gratifies me more than I can express. Is there anything I can do to forward your views? Reggie," replied Mr. Mordaunt, with pleasure in his tone at his son's almost unhopd for acquiescence in his wishes.

"Yes! father, I want some money. A good deal too. Travelling is costly and I wish to send in my fees for lectures, etc., for the coming term at once, and I have some accounts to pay," answered the son, inventing his items as he went along.

"Name the figure, Reggie, and you need not cut yourself down too much. In that you desire to do as I wish you in a matter difficult enough to you to be obedient, you have shewed yourself a good and dutiful son. You have not found me an unkind or exacting father, and in this affair it is your best interest that I am consulting. I am very glad you have come to me in this spirit; as I could have wished my son to do. It is appreciated Reggie. And now how much shall I say," continued Mr. Mordaunt as he opened his cheque book.

His father's words were very bitter to Reggie; they stung him to the soul despite the accomplishment of his desires. It was very painful to him, very humiliating and, as he felt it, infinitely shameful, to sit and listen to, to take as his due, his father's praises; knowing that it was all a lie and gross deception. But he felt himself too far gone to retreat and plucking up his spirits at the thought of his happy morrow, he replied:

"Let me have six hundred dollars, father. It will do for the present."

"Here is a cheque for a thousand; the difference you can

use as you please. Give up this absurd fancy for that girl, my dear son, and anything you can ask me to do, I will do."

"I will do my best; father. I can say no more," replied the shameless Reggie. "Thank you much for this money. I will put it to a good use; you may depend," his thoughts flying to his Emily.

"You will not go for a day or two, Reggie, we have seen nothing of you yet."

"I wish to go to Cascades to-morrow; father, and would like a carriage and horses early." "But I will be back again to-morrow evening early," he continued, seeing his father's eye bent upon him in expectation of his answer.

"And now I will go up and see Ethel, before it is too late."

* * * * *

At ten o'clock the next morning, a young gentleman driving a fast pair of horses, drew up at the junction of the Cascades road, and looked earnestly along that stretching towards Ten Lakes. He had not long to wait. In a few minutes a well-known figure came in sight. He was beside her in a moment.

"My darling! My own Emily! Mine at last," he exclaimed rapturously, as he stopped beside her. "I have frightened myself all the way lest there might be something wrong. How did you get away? Is all right at home? and no suspicion?"

"All right! Reggie, so far as I am concerned. They think I am out for the day, but we must get away from here. You will have to drive to the next house for my trunk. I got it out nicely last night, and the people of the house think it is for Lake Mordaunt. I'll walk on in advance," said the practical Emily, who could not get along without finery.

"All right." I'll get it! But I hope it's not heavy. How in the world did you get it out here?"

"Oh! I managed it! But don't delay, Reggie, I don't like staying longer than I can help so near home, with you." Reggie drove up to the house indicated, a small farmer's, asked for

the trunk of a man lounging about the door ; who put it in the carriage for him. Reggie handed him a dollar, and wished him "good morning."

"Good morning ! Mr. Reginald. A pleasant drive to you both and soft words from the parson," he replied with a grin, which stretched his mouth back under his ears.

"What's that nonsense you're talking ? Take care your tongue does not get you into trouble," said Reggie looking round with a face in which the annoyance was as palpable as the anger, and he drove off, to rejoin Emily, the loud guffaw of the too observant bucolic following him for the next hundred yards.

"Let me help you up ! my darling," he exclaimed as he jumped to the ground. In another second they were off as fast as the horses could speed on the road towards Cascades.

The man lounging about the house door watched them amusingly as they drove away at the unusual pace.

"Plain as the nose on a man's face ; jumping the fence when they can't open the gate ! Whether will I go now—to old Dearborn at the Bank, or to the Lake. "Dearborn's too stingy though, and I'll knock a V spot out of the old gentleman at the Lake for carrying up the news of this scrape ; see if I don't. But I'll give them a start any way, and I won't go up till afternoon. Won't old Mordaunt rave though, when he hears of his young spark cutting off with that Dearborn girl ; she's mighty pretty ; that's a fac'. But if ever there was a consarned young fool in the world, Reg. Mordaunt's him, to shine up to that tearing limb." And giving vent to his houghts in such manner, the honest agriculturist departed about his business.

CHAPTER IV.

MINE STILL ! I WILL NOT GIVE HER UP.

The heavy gloom which had fallen upon the family of the Mordaunts, by Ethel's illness and her unhappiness, had lifted to

all appearance, and to them, had seemed wholly to have passed away in the joy of her happy recovery. Their horizon had lightened up to them again, and the father and the mother, with thankful hearts recognized the mercy which had come to them. The deadly fear which had struck cold to them had been dispelled and their days were again brighter for them.

But the dark cloud had but lifted for a while, and its descent upon them, all too soon, in heavy blackness was the more sudden and remorseless, that their brief gleam of sunshine had so apparently cleared the air from grief for them. Where a great misfortune that bears down the spirit to the limit of the endurable, as we think, has come to us; how bitterly hard and unjust seems to us the approach of a new storm; the still palpitating and quivering heart-string to be wrung afresh by anguish and intolerable sorrow.

"We have had our cruel wrong—the cutting down of life's dearest hope, surely for us shall be no more misfortune," we cry, storm-wrecked and broken and tried to the uttermost. Wounded almost to death, as we imagine, for us no more smooth seas or illumined skies, halting painfully on our path, as we seek our strength again—"Truly we are protected from further harm."

As Dr. Streatham leisurely made his way towards Lake Mordaunt about noon of the morning on which Reggie had made his early departure on his sad wild goose chase, he was suddenly awakened from the reverie into which country doctors on their long drives are so apt to fall, by the appearance of Barney driving his horse at break-neck speed along the road towards him.

"Docthor!" he shouted, as he drew up his foaming horse as they met. "For the love av Heaven, stir up that great baste o' yourn, and get along till the house as fast as if the ould Harry wor afther ye. Little Miss Ally—the Lord presarve her the precious lamb—is taken mortal sick, and its crazy they are waitin' fur ye," and Barney, turning his vehicle in the road with a sudden and sharp manœuvre that effected his purpose with a

promptness that was no good for his springs, was close behind the other in a moment.

"What's the matter with her, Barney? What symptoms does she exhibit," roared the doctor, turning round in his carriage, as it flew over the stones.

"Och! the sorra a bit av me knows av her symptoms. I did ait till hear, but kem afther ye hot fut, but I heard wan av the gur-rels, bad cess till their long tongues, they're always talking, a sayin' that the darlint little pet did'nt know any wan, an' that her eyes wor squintin' like," returned Barney.

"H'm!" and the doctor turned his face round again, and said no more, but whipped up his horse to its best speed.

Little Alida Mordaunt, the bright little sunbeam of the house, the pet and the joy alike of father and mother, brother and sister, had never been well since the fearful whooping-cough had come to rack her delicate little frame. She was a beautiful child, too precocious and advanced for her years, too fastidious and refined in her little ideas of dress, and the extreme neatness which could not bear a soil on her pinafore, or a stain on the taper little white fingers. So affectionate, so winning and attractive in all her little ways, she was the delight of all around her, but her clever little sayings, her advanced little refinements, as much as the extreme delicacy of her beauty gave many a pang to her idolizing mother's heart, to be comforted only by that vain but natural outspring of hope, "It is impossible! God will never take my darling, my beautiful little sunbeam, whom I love so, from me. I could not survive it," and as she would watch the sprightly little child, who hardly ever left her side ("Mamma's little pollow tat—mamma's little shadow," she would say to herself,) occupying herself with the amusements of seven instead of three years of age—gravely sewing a hem in her little dress almost as straight as her mother could do it, repeating her letters or singing the little hymn tunes that the brain of three years should never have known; watching the conversation of

those around her with the keen understanding of it all, that should not have been! asking questions that were not of her years, with a passion for flowers and beautiful things not natural to a child, the fond proud mother would think, with swelling heart, "God will not take my darling from me! She has such interest, such enjoyment in her little life; she is so clever and so active, and she knows so much. It is impossible! She would never be meant for death."

The eager lovely dark eyes, contrasted with the transparent white skin, fair as a lily, the animated speaking look of the bright face, the broad brow wherein the tender young brain was too entirely at work, betrayed a highly nervous and sensitive organization, as it did the inherent delicacy of frame of such. Too much of the mind—too little of the animal.

Such are God's children, whom He loves so well that He takes them to Himself from the world for which they are too beautiful, too pure and too bright. For these He makes His probation short. To be loved intensely by those to whom they are given, to live their few bright years in love and the pure sweet joys of innocent childhood.

Happy, charmed and interested, their little lives to which comes not sin, or trial, or grief, and the pure spirits are called from the lovely clay, which fittingly clothed the ethereal beauty to rest in the Saviour's arms who loves them in Heaven for ever.

The terrible paroxysms of the whooping-cough had been all too severe upon the delicate and nervous little Alida, and had wrought insidious mischief that showed no sign of its presence. The cough had ceased too suddenly, and had left her worn down in strength, wasted and emaciated. And she had not improved.

Now and then there would appear a flash of her former bright self, to be followed by depression, weakness and utter weariness.

Her appetite failed, and she could not be tempted to eat ; her strength and her never abundant flesh wasted day by day.

During Ethel's illness the increasing weariness and continued drowsiness more and more alarmed her mother, and for the last few days she had given up all her former activity.

"Take me up, mamma ! Ally's tired," was her constant petition, and she lay for hours, resting her weary heavy head upon her mother's shoulders, or slept away her mother's absence on her nursery sofa.

But, on this morning, she had insisted on lying down immediately after her daily bath, and she had lain with painfully large bright eyes, gazing fixedly about the room, and her mother became anxious for the Doctor's visit, if not specially alarmed, for her little darling, though evidently ill, continued to ask her interested questions concerning the welfare of the out-door objects of her daily solicitude, and when the instant reply was made, the pleased smile on her white little face, told that the pleasurable tide of her innocent life's associations had not been effaced by her illness.

At length, however, the loved little voice ceased its prattlings, and Mrs. Mordaunt, bending over her child, noticed a strange, fixed look of the wide-open eyes, the dilatation of the pupils, and a slight, but perceptible squint. Her little darling no longer recognized her, and was unconscious.

In a state of terrible alarm, she rang for help, and Barney was dispatched with orders to use the utmost speed for the doctor.

The latter, on reaching the house, stood upon no ceremony, but made his way directly for the nursery, and, with a quick "good morning" to Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt, who stood with perturbed and grief-stricken faces, watching their poor little darling, who no longer knew them, approached the sick child, and looked closely down into her face.

"Oh ! What is the matter with her, Dr. Streatham ? She has

been unconscious for half an hour, and look at the dreadful expression of her eyes. Oh ! my darling ! my darling ! Is she in danger, Doctor ? Will she get better from this ?" exclaimed poor Mrs. Mordaunt, giving way in spite of herself.

Dr. Streatham did not at once reply to her, but went on with his examination of the little sufferer, gave some directions to the attendants, prepared, and himself administered, with great difficulty—as the poor little child's teeth were firmly clenched—a very carefully weighed-out remedy ; then, turning to Mrs. Mordaunt, he said, gently and sorrowfully—

"Yes, madam, there is danger—very great danger. Your little child is very ill, indeed. She is alive, it is true, and while there is life, there is hope ; but, I must warn you not to build too much on hope. I have foreseen and battled against this for some time. Unfortunately, the little child has had no strength, and powerful medicines could not be administered. While there is life there is hope, but you must prepare yourselves to bear either result. Your little daughter is attacked by hydrocephalus, superinduced by whooping-cough, and I need not tell you that, weakened and emaciated as she is, she is in the very greatest danger."

He gave some further directions, and then continued to Mrs. Mordaunt, "I need not impress upon you, madam, the necessity of the persistent and exact fulfilment of these directions. The little child must be very closely watched, never left a moment alone. I shall remain some hours here, and will return for the night, and so will go to see after my horse." He then left the room, after quickly signing to Mr. Mordaunt to follow him.

When they had reached the library, and Mr. Mordaunt had given orders for Barney to attend to the horse, Dr. Streatham turned to his companion and said—

"It is necessary that I should, at once, tell you, sir, what I could not do directly to the poor mother, that your little

child's case is, I fear, a hopeless one—absolutely hopeless. She has not two days to live. Her——”

“Oh! do not tell me that, Doctor, that there is no hope,” interrupted Mr. Mordaunt, his face showing his perturbation. “I cannot lose my little darling! Oh! Doctor Streatham, can nothing be done to save her?”

“All has been done that is possible, Mr. Mordaunt,” gravely replied the Doctor. “For some time past, I have been battling against the approach of the terrible disease, but unavailingly, I am sorry to say. The delicate, and too active little brain has been unable to withstand the violent paroxysms of the cough, and the effusion has been steadily increasing, notwithstanding all my efforts. Later on, you must gently break the sad news to Mrs. Mordaunt, for which the way is already prepared. But it must be kept from Miss Mordaunt, who is unable yet to bear such tidings. If God so wills it, your little darling will be restored to you. I can give you no hope. No earthly power can save her.

* * * * *

A heavy gloom, indeed, had come to overshadow the lives of this poor father and mother. Their eldest daughter in unhappiness and bitter sorrow, awakening to them so slowly from an illness that had so nearly been fatal—awakening, too, not to a new lease of joy and hope, but one of dark grief and regret—and now the hand of Death was upon their bright and lovely little youngest child. Theirs for two short days more, and then, to be God's own for ever. No more theirs, no more on earth. Never again to hear the sweet little loving voice—never again to clasp, with yearning intensity, the beloved form to their hearts—never again, with fond, proud delight, to note the progress of the active little brain—to mark the budding beauties of their little darling—never again until—their last breath of earth drawn—like a flash, the joyful recognition in Heaven restores to them, for all eternity, the loved and the lost.

On earth, she was to be for them but a memory ; their little Alida, in two short days, to be nothing more than a memory.

No wonder the poor parents' hearts lay frozen within them, this terrible day, watching their little child fading away from them into the tomb. Their grief was great enough for them ; and, happily, they were, as yet, unconscious of another evil preparing through their son, for the further wringing of their hearts.

They passed the hours of that bitter afternoon by the bedside of their dying little girl. Bitter hours that are common to every life, every day occurrences, yet how horrible is their freshness. Use—that so deadens the palled senses to most things of this earth, lessens not the terrors of death, that so continuously assail poor humanity.

The afternoon wore on for them in their sorrow. A sorrow further embittered by the sad reflection of the cruel necessity that, for poor Ethel's own sake, she must be kept in ignorance of her little sister's illness and coming death ; could never see her again in life, nor even have the melancholy satisfaction of bidding the last "farewell."

And why was Reggie away to-day, of all days ? But he would be back ere night, and see his little darling sister again. But, oh, how short the time ! Two days ! One almost passed, and then ?

But they enjoyed one sad satisfaction. Their little Alida came back to consciousness, and recognized again the loving faces that watched with such fearful hope for that coming back. She recognized them again, and though evidently much weaker, had spoken and told her mother that "she loved her."

Oh, precious words ! To be treasured in tearful joy in that loving heart which heard them, until its last beat on earth. Precious words ! That made the bitter trial still more bitter, though they would not have been surrendered though they cost millions of agonies.

The gleam of hope, which had sprung to their anxious minds that their darling had spoken again, and was conscious, was dispelled by the grave, sad shake of Dr. Streatham's head, and he had shortly afterwards taken his departure, promising, however, to return for the night, and the grief-stricken parents were again alone, dividing their time between the equally terrible alternative of watching the ebbing hours of their dying child's life and short visits to the bedside of the all-unconscious Ethel, who had to be kept in ignorance, and before whom their faces had to be smiling while their hearts were bursting.

Another half-hour passed, and a carriage was heard rapidly approaching the house. "Can it be Reggie," was the hope that sprung up to them. In a few minutes a servant entered the room, where they sat with their little Ally, and with large surprised eyes, said—

"If you please, ma'am, Mr. Vance is downstairs in the drawing-room and wishes to see you. He asked for Miss Ethel, but I told him she was ill, and he wants to see you very particularly."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Mordaunt, before his astonished wife could speak. "That will do. Please to come back in five minutes."

"What shall we do, Florence?" he continued to his wife.

"He must go away," she replied. "I cannot see him, I cannot leave my poor little darling, whom I have for but so few hours, and I cannot see him. We have suffering enough, and of his causing. That my poor Ethel cannot even give her last kiss to her dying little sister. Let the man go away. I will not see him," continued Mrs. Mordaunt, with heat, though her voice was broken by her grief.

"Don't speak in that manner, my dearest Florence. Our trouble is sent us by God," replied her husband. "I will go down to Vance, and get him to go away. This is no time for

explanations. Should Ethel know that he is here?" he continued.

"No, better not, I think, Henry. We can tell her of his visit later on, when she is stronger. It will be too exciting for her. Go down to him and ask him to go away now, at any rate, and don't stay long," responded Mrs. Mordaunt.

Edwin Vance looked up as the father of his Ethel entered the drawing-room, looked up with an anxious face, that was haggard and pale, and on his forehead was distinctly visible the bruise made by Reggie's fist three days before in Toronto.

He advanced a step forward, and his lips moved as if he tried to speak, but could not.

Mr. Mordaunt, however, who generally went direct to his point, forestalled him in what he was about to say. Advancing quickly into the room, he bowed gravely, and, motioning Edwin to a chair, while taking one himself, proceeded—

"Mr. Vance, I do not bring good news with me, either for you or ourselves. My poor little Alida is lying on her death-bed, passing away from us ; we shall have her but a few hours more," and the grave, composed voice quivered as he said the words. "And our interview, to-day, must necessarily be a short one."

"Alida dying!" ejaculated Edwin, horror-stricken. "Dying, did you say? Surely not that, Mr. Mordaunt. The servant told me just now, the first time I had heard, that Ethel had been ill, but was recovering. I had never imagined this, though. How very terrible."

"My poor little bright Ally," said the father, but more to himself than in answer, and with broken voice. "Ethel, too, has been very ill, and is but slowly recovering from that which has nearly brought her to the grave. For many days, there was naught else before us for her than the grave, but, by God's mercy, she has been restored to us from its very brink. Our troubles are very heavy."

"Great Heavens! But why was I not told? Why have I been kept in ignorance of all? If Ethel had died! Why was I not told, Mr. Mordaunt? And, poor little Ally, too, dying? It was not right."

"You should have been told, Mr. Vance. I am sorry that you were not told, especially—it is but right you should know—that you are charged with the cause of Ethel's illness," returned Mr. Mordaunt, looking him firmly in the face.

"What do you say, Mr. Mordaunt? That I am charged with being the cause of Ethel's illness? I do not understand. How could I possibly have anything to do with it? What is the meaning of all this?" responded Edwin, excitedly, but evidently much mystified.

"Simply, what I have said," answered Mr. Mordaunt. "Personally, I know but little of the affair, and can give you but few particulars. One morning, over three weeks ago, Ethel was found fainting upon the floor by her mother, and when she had come to consciousness, and was questioned, she told her that you had been false to her—that you had a prior engagement to another young lady, to whom you had behaved very badly, and that all was over.

"That there was written proof against you—a letter from yourself to this young lady, and another from some relative of the latter, denouncing your conduct. These I have not seen, nor, I believe, has Mrs. Mordaunt. That night, Ethel was seized with brain-fever, and we know nothing more of the affair. Mrs. Mordaunt, however, feels convinced of the truth of these charges against you, I may as well tell you, and so, likewise, does Ethel."

"Mr. Mordaunt!" exclaimed Edwin, in much excitement. "Is it possible that Ethel—that any of you can believe in such a monstrous absurd, and utterly unfounded charge against me? That I am engaged to another young lady? Who is this young lady, may I ask? I demand the names—her's and her relative?"

I am engaged to Miss Ethel Mordaunt, to no other young lady, and never have been. A letter of mine, one of the proofs!" he continued. "The thing is absurd. I have never written to any young lady in my life, except on the merest matters of business. Certainly, never anything which could be tortured by any possibility into an engagement. Let me see these letters? Can I see Ethel, herself? Is she well enough?"

"No! Mr. Vance. It is quite impossible that you should see her. All excitement is absolutely forbidden; she does not even know that her poor little sister is dying. She will never see her again. Can I say more," responded Mr. Mordaunt. "As to the letters, neither myself nor Mrs. Mordaunt have seen them; we do not know where they are, and we dare not ask Ethel for them yet. Neither can I give you the names you ask for, for I have never heard them."

"You must get them for me, Mr. Mordaunt; for I am innocent, and I will disprove these things against me, and clear my good name, if it costs me every cent of which I am possessed. Good Heavens! What has brought these terrible events to pass?" said poor Edwin Vance, standing before him whom he had so lately regarded as father-in-law, with pale face and white lips, with utter misery in his soul.

"But tell me how my poor Ethel is? Mine still, for I will never give her up. Is she really out of danger, and safe?" he continued, with anxious and melting eyes, as his thoughts flew back to his beloved, who had so nearly passed away from the world, and he unknowing.

"Yes! she is out of danger and improving; but she has had a terrible illness and it will be long before she is perfectly well again. She is greatly changed, you would hardly recognize her again. But she is out of danger."

"Thank God for that! Thank God for His mercy, that my darling is safe. I rejoice, though I am miserable enough. I wish from my heart that it was the same with your poor little

Alida," exclaimed Edwin, " I must not, for your sake, prolong this interview under the terrible circumstances, though to leave with matters as they are is horrible enough for me."

Then, after a second's pause, continuing—

" Mr. Mordaunt ! May I ask you, if you, yourself, believe these dreadful charges against me ? From the tenor of our conversation, I am inclined to think you do not," he continued, as he took up his hat to go.

" Well ! Mr. Vance, I must say that I do not wholly believe them, though, as I told you before, both Mrs. Mordaunt and Ethel hold a contrary opinion. From the simple reason that Emily Dearborn was the bringer of the charges against you, and produced the letters spoken of in proof, I am not inclined to put faith in them, altogether, as I have no good opinion of that young lady, and deem her capable of any treachery," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

" Emily Dearborn !" exclaimed Edwin, in astonishment, but at this moment a warning tap was heard on the door, and a second later it opened, and a servant entered—

" If you please, sir, a man, called Alonzo Rooter, a farmer, from the Cascades road, is in the hall, and wishes to see you particularly."

" Please to tell him I cannot see him to-day, on any account. He must come again. You should have told him that at once," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

" I did tell him, sir, that you could not see him to-day, but he said it was very important business concerning Mr. Reginald that he wanted to see you about," replied the girl.

" Concerning Mr. Reginald !" exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt. That is——"

" Yes, it's just that, Squire Mordaunt," ejaculated Mr. Rooter, showing himself at the door, where he had probably placed himself from the first.

" And I guess ye'd best hear my news, though how you'll like

them is another thing. It's kinder important, too, I reckon, and I've lost a good half-day's work from my crops to bring it to ye, knowin' ye to be a gentleman that won't let a poor man lose his time for ye. Worth five dollars, too, at this season of the year."

"If you have any news to tell, Mr. Rooter, pray tell it, and you shall not lose your time. What is the matter with Mr. Reginald? Out with it at once. Remain a moment longer, Mr. Vance, I still have something to say to you."

"Now your news, Mr. Rooter," continued Mr. Mordaunt.

"Oh! I'll tell you fast enough. I'm not scart to tell it," replied the free and easy Mr. Rooter. "Wall! the hull bilin' of the matter's this, that yer son, Reginald, and Dearborn's fly-away girl—the big one—took it into their heads to clear out this morning for the States, where the parsons aint as particular about licenses as they are in Canidy, and they're married by this time, I reckon. Any way they left this morning down the Cascades road as hard as his horses could pelt along, she with him, and got her trunk with her too."

"With Emily Dearborn!" gasped out Mr. Mordaunt, turning deadly pale, as he rose suddenly to his feet, and turned towards the unabashed Mr. Rooter.

"This morning! It is impossible. You are mistaken. My God! Let not this come to us. We havè more than we can bear," continued the poor father, lifting up his eyes. "It's impossible! You must be mistaken, man."

"Oh! I'm a man for the matter of that, but my name is Mr. Rooter, though, squire," replied that gentleman with perfect coolness. "However, as ye've sickness and trouble in the house, and this is hard news for ye, I'll say nothing about the little trifle. But I'm not mistaken. It's true enough, squire, as ye'll find."

"Tell me all you know about the matter, Mr. Rooter, for Heaven's sake," replied Mr. Mordaunt. "And why, if this oc-

curred, as you say, this morning, did you not come before with the news, when something might— Go on ! Pray go on !”

“ Wall ! ye see, Mr. Mordaunt, I didn’t know myself what was up till nigh on to four o’clock,” said Mr. Rooter, quite willing to make the story suit himself, regardless of the truth of his details. “ But I’ll tell ye the hull of it. Last night Em’ly Dearborn kim to our house and left a trunk with my missis, saying some of your people would call for it in the morning. That looked odd enough, but yet it might be likely enough too, and we thought it was for the house here. Wall ! At ten this morning up drives your son Reginald and gets the trunk. I give it him myself, and five minits afore this I seed the Dearborn girl walking down the road past our house, but I thought nothing of that though, till, going on to four this afternoon, Jim Lakes dropped in on his way home, and he told us he’d met them eight mile this side of Cascades driving like mad, a little after twelve and him a kissing of her. My wife then allowed as how I’d better come up and tell ye, and that’s all. Got a fiver handy, squire ? and I’ll go.”

Having received the required five dollars, Mr. Rooter departed, after leaving the following consolatory remarks behind him :

“ Good day, Squire Mordaunt. I’m sorry for ye and for Mr. Reggie too. She’s a mighty pretty girl, that’s a fact, but oh ! Moses, aint she a born devil though.”

Mr. Mordaunt dropped into his chair and remained a few seconds with his head bowed down in his hands. Suddenly raising himself, he said to Edwin :

“ You came from Cascades this afternoon, did you not, Mr. Vance ? Have you seen anything of them ?”

“ Yes, Mr. Mordaunt, I must confirm the statement you have just heard, in so far that I met Reginald and Miss Dearborn in Cascades this afternoon at one o’clock or a little later. They left the hotel and went towards the station, and I was, I ac-

knowledge, surprised, but did not speak to him, for a reason of my own," answered Edwin, sadly, for the discomposure of the other was very apparent.

"Then I have another great sorrow to meet, Mr. Vance," he continued, turning himself towards that gentleman, "I have to express my sincere regret for the cowardly attack upon you in the streets of Toronto at the hands of Reginald Mordaunt, my son, whom I am now almost afraid to name as such, and I have to——"

"Do not mention the matter, Mr. Mordaunt. Think no more of it than I do myself. You—we both of us—have grief sufficient without taking concern of trifles," replied Edwin. "Of the attack itself I never again thought. It opened my eyes to the knowledge that something was wrong at Lake Mordaunt, which sufficiently excluded all else from my mind, and hastened my appearance here.

"But in my own miseries I must not detain you from your greater, and I must force myself to go, though more unhappy than when I arrived. You say that Emily Dearborn produced these pretended charges against me before Ethel. That is very strange, to say the least of it. But I can say no more at present, and I can only ask you, in justice to myself, since I cannot see my poor Ethel, to convey to her, when she is well enough to be spoken to upon the subject, the solemn assurance, which I now give you, of my entire innocence of these charges: that I have never in my life laid myself open to aught which could justify the breaking of our engagement, or of which she could reasonably complain, excepting one act brought by myself to her knowledge and freely forgiven; of my unalterable love and affection; that I will disprove these false allegations against me, and that I am as worthy of her now as she considered me to be before they were brought against me. Tell her of my visit here, of my terrible anxiety for the past fortnight when not hearing from her, and my deep sorrow and sympathy with her in her

illness. Will you promise me this, Mr. Mordaunt? and to procure me the letters or copies of them which have produced all this misery for us?"

"I undertake to give her your very words, Mr. Vance," answered Mr. Mordaunt. "And if possible I will procure the copies or the letters themselves. Such will be but fair towards you. And now I ——"

But his sentence was left unfinished, for the door opened and with a quick step Mrs. Mordaunt entered the room. She glanced, merely glanced contemptuously and coldly towards Edwin Vance, bowed gravely and in a tone whose chilliness was remarkably different to that which he had been accustomed from her, said briefly:

"How do you do, sir!" And, turning towards her husband, she continued:

"So soon as you can conclude your interview with this gentleman, I would wish to see you up stairs. Pray, my dear Henry, defer to a more suitable time your mere business matters," and Mrs. Mordaunt, with a strong accent on the last three words, looked meaningly at her husband.

"Our interview is finished, my dear. Mr. Vance sufficiently appreciates the sad circumstances in which we are placed. I have stated to him the events with which he is connected. He denies them fervently, and requires that the so-called proofs of the allegations resting upon him be produced. This I have promised shall ——"

"Mr. Vance does not require the production of proofs. They would be simply useless to him. We need not to prove the truth of that of which his own conscience convicts him. He can deceive no further, and I decline to hold parley with him or to furnish that which he requires, that he may destroy them, I presume. Mr. Vance had better return whence he came, to her, whom with us, he would deceive. It would be more becom-

ing than his present intrusion here," interrupted Mrs. Mordaunt, hastily and decisively.

"This letter, sir," she continued, "Miss Mordaunt has desired should be forwarded. I beg to hand it to you personally. It contains her last words—and our last words to you. For myself, and upon my daughter's part, I now intimate that we decline to hold further parley with you. Good afternoon, sir," and with another bow, Mrs. Mordaunt left the room.

Edwin Vance, who had listened to this address apparently bereft of his senses, attempted to speak at its conclusion, but Mrs. Mordaunt had closed the door behind her and was out of reach of his words as effectually as though a province separated them.

He had mechanically taken the letter handed him, and as the instant of his surprise was over, he tore it open and perused the words the reader has already seen.

By the events which had already occurred to him he was well enough prepared as to its contents, but this was a direct and palpable blow that brought home directly to him the fact that his Ethel would no longer be his Ethel.

His sensibilities had already been so worked upon that the new blow could not much further stagger him, but yet he was staggered, and he turned his agitated face away from his companion's view for a few moments of uncontrollable agony.

At length, mastering himself, he looked again at Mr. Mordaunt.

"This is my dismissal, sir. Ethel gives me to understand that all is over between us; that our engagement, our happy love is ended. What have I done that this misery—this destruction of everything—of every hope of my life should come upon me? Yet I will not accept the dismissal—my engagement I shall not consider at an end. It still exists. I go! I go to disprove the falsehoods which have come between us. I *will*!"

disprove them, and I know that my darling is just—to do me right.

“Her to whom my love is due!” he exclaimed, bitterly, throwing the letter from which he quoted down upon the table.

“My love is due to Ethel Mordaunt, and to no person else—never has been, and, God knows, never shall be. I love her! I love her! She alone, and I have never loved another.

“Will you tell her this, Mr. Mordaunt? You have promised, and you have also promised to get me copies at any rate, of the papers, forged as they must be, against me. That is but just. I am innocent of all this, and without them I have nothing to work upon to clear myself of this odium, and regain what I have lost. Will you get them for me, Mr. Mordaunt?”

“I will, if I *can* do so, Mr. Vance, but from that which you have heard just now, you cannot but see that I must not be sanguine as to success. Good-bye, Mr. Vance. I am sorry for all the unhappy events, and hope for both your sake and Ethel’s that all will come right.”

“Good-bye, sir, for the present. Write to me as soon as you can to tell me of Ethel and poor little Ally, and send me the copies. Good-bye, Mr. Mordaunt,” said Edwin, shaking the out-stretched hand that was to have been his father-in-law’s. “God send you strength in your griefs, sir, and me also in mine. I never thought to have left this house as I do to-day.”

In another minute Edwin Vance had driven away.

CHAPTER V.

THE DYING LITTLE PEACEMAKER.

Mr. Mordaunt remained a few moments immersed in painful thought, gazing after the receding form of the visitor who had just left him, who carried away with him grief almost as bitter

as his own, and turned to make his way again to the room where lay his dying little daughter—the present and heaviest agony, to which was now added another that would have been keen and intense were not its aspect so overshadowed by the heavier horrors in which Death encompassed his house.

As he entered the room, his wife, sitting by the side of her unconscious little darling, weeping a mother's bitter tears, looked up as he approached.

"Is there no hope for us, Henry? It cannot be that I am to lose my little Ally."

"It does not rest with us, my poor darling. If it pleases God to take our little child we can rest very sure that it is better for her—better for us, also, being His will, he replied, and as he looked on the convulsed form that addressed him, his half-formed resolve to tell her the new trouble that had fallen upon them melted away.

"She has enough to bear for the present. I shall keep that sorrow from her as long as it can be kept away," he thought.

"Oh! Henry," continued Mrs. Mordaunt after a pause, "Ethel has divined by some means or other that that man has been here, and she is excited. Could you not go to her for a little while?"

"Yes! but I am sorry she knows that. Who could have told her?"

"No one has told her. I took all precaution. But go to her and try to comfort her; she is weak and ill yet," replied Mrs. Mordaunt.

"How am I to comfort her? Though I am now more than ever convinced of Vance's truth, yet she will not, it would appear, believe it."

But when he had seated himself by Ethel's bedside, the first question she asked him was on another and very different subject.

"Papa! why do you all keep it so secret from me? Why

cannot I see poor little Ally before—before—when she is so ill?"

"Oh, Ethel!" exclaimed her father, horror-stricken, for he had not in the least expected this, and for a moment he could find no other words. But his daughter's eyes were fixed upon his face, and he had to reply at once. "Certainly you shall see her, but you are not strong yet, Ethel. We had to keep poor Ally's illness from you. You shall see her, if you wish it so much. Though there is not," with a gulp, "any immediate necessity for it yet."

"Oh! yes, papa, there is. I know—I know—and I must see my poor little darling for the last time. Oh! papa, you would not let my little sister die without letting me have my last kiss of her in life. I could not have borne it had she passed away without a last farewell. I could not have borne it to have been left in ignorance. None would tell me, but I knew. Oh! my poor little Ally! My poor little darling!" and Ethel, bending forward, with her face bowed into her hands, shed the bitterest tears that had yet come to her now darkened life.

"Yes! Ethel, our poor little darling is leaving us. Her bright little spirit will soon be with its Maker. Oh! Ally, Ally," and the father gave way to his grief as had done his daughter. "But, Ethel, my darling, you must not give way—for our sakes you must not. It was to save you from this that we did not speak," he continued, controlling himself as he witnessed his still sick child's agitation. "You shall see her, Ethel. You shall see her at once. But how did you learn the sad truth that our darling was—was to go from us?"

"The knowledge came to me, papa, I know not how. I am ill and weak, and, I suppose, a morbid sensitiveness gave me this intuitive knowledge of the evil hanging over. Oh! papa, just think what it would have been to me in after days if God had not in His mercy given me this perception, and my sweet

little sister had drawn her last breath within the few feet that separate us, and I in ignorance. What undying horror. Could I have had another contented hour?

"For happiness I no longer look!"

"Oh! say not that, my darling. It is all very dreadful. Our out-look is indeed darkened, but it is God's will that this agony should come to us," answered her father, and her words recalled to his mind the miserable fact that his beloved son, his other child had by his fatal act of folly, brought upon his head the undying horror—the horror of remembrance to him for all time that, whilst he was marrying, his sister was dying.

As the father's thought called up this, and the—but too probably blasted happiness of his son's life, it was by stong effort of his will that he so far conquered his emotion as to be enabled to carry on the conversation. As he looked at his daughter on her sick bed, changed and weak, pale as the sheets that enwrapped her; he remembered too that her life had become darkened over; that her prospects of happiness were blighted also; that in addition to the death stroke upon them—the passing away of the little darling of the house—and the blow that Reggie's miserable union was to bring upon them all; had not Ethel another grief? Was not she the hardest tried? Her's the heaviest lot? Was not her grief heavier even than his own? As he remembered this and looked at the wasted form of his beautiful daughter, a gush of tenderness sprang up towards her in his unselfish breast.

Had she not more to bear than he had, and she not so well able to bear it?

"Ethel!" he continued, "I will send your mother to you, and you shall see your poor little Ally now, at once. But, Ethel, Edwin Vance was here to-day. He had come to see you."

"Yes, papa! I know," she hastily replied. "But I do not wish to hear of that to-day, at any rate. I want Ally—to see Ally."

"And, Ethel, I believe he is innocent—that a vile plot has been brought against you to separate you from him by—by—by—that girl. He indignantly denies the charge of faithlessness, and demands an explicit statement of the charges against him, when he can at once prove his innocence."

"No! No! Papa," exclaimed Ethel, excitedly, and waving her hands as if to keep off the subject from her.

"I will not hear anything about him. This is not the time. It is almost sacrilege, and Ally's lovely little life drawing so fast to its close.

"Oh! talk not of that. Just think, papa. I have not seen my sister since I have been ill—so long, so long—and now she is dying. And I should never have seen her again, had it not been for myself; she would have died from me and I unknowing; left me for ever hungering and tortured for her. As it is, though I shall see her again, the darling! how dreadful; how horrible it all is."

And so Ethel had the sorrowful consolation of the last parting with little Ally.

Supported by her father and mother, she wept out the last Farewell, and kissed in floods of tears, the little face, beautiful still, though so sadly, wastedly changed, that she would see no more on earth. A sorrowful consolation, for only by the longing glance of the yet bright dark eyes, and the feeble motion of the strengthless lips could the dying child return her sister's caresses, into whose clinging kisses all time was crowded; long years of love were thronged, the close yearning embrace of poor helpless humanity that would fain hold back from the awful gulf of Death its loved and dear ones—who pass away, nevertheless, over the dark brink, though every heart-string cracks.

For poor Ethel her little sister's life was over. She was carried back to her room half-fainting, and the merciful sleep induced by the opiates administered by the vexed doctor shielded her from further present agony.

* * * * *

"But where is Reggie? What can have kept him? Why is he away to-day of all days?" sobbed Mrs. Mordaunt, as sitting by the side of her dying child, Dr. Streatham gently told her that ere the morning had dawned her darling would be no more.

"He should be here. He will never see her again, and how dreadful it will all be to him. He should not have gone, though Heaven knows, I never anticipated this. It is cruel! It is cruel!"

Cruel enough was the thought to the poor mother, and cruel enough to the father, who carried silently in his breast the knowledge that their son would not come—that he was almost lost to them, and that his coming would be, even at this time, a greater grief than his absence.

He would not add to his wife's bitter sorrow by telling her the truth. He would keep it away from her as long as it could be kept.

But as the evening wore on into night and no Reggie came, Mrs. Mordaunt grew anxious for him, as well as distressed at his non-appearance, and she could not be appeased.

Her husband's endeavours to calm her fears at length were fruitless.

She became alarmed that some accident had befallen her Reggie, and all assurances of his being very well able to take care of himself fell uncomfoting and unheeded upon the mother's heart.

The pained and unnatural manner of her husband in speaking of him was not unnoticed by her. Something was wrong, she was convinced, and her pertinacious questionings and very apparent alarm at length had their effect.

To keep her longer in ignorance of the fact that her son would not come had become a greater evil than telling her

the whole truth. The certainty could be no worse than the suspense.

"My dear Florence," he said, "I had intended for your sake—bitterly stricken as you are—to have kept a further grief from you, but your needless anxiety for your son forces the avowal upon me. Reggie is safe enough, so far as his bodily health goes, but he will not be here to-night or for many nights to come. I have but too great reason to believe that he and Emily Dearborn went away together this morning, and by this time are married."

"Married! Married to Emily Dearborn! What is that you say, Henry? Impossible! You cannot trifle with me—you would not—thus," ejaculated the poor mother, rising from her seat beside her sick child, and confronting her husband with horror-stricken face.

"It is not impossible, Florence! I am not trifling with you. That it were not true what would I not give. He went away with Emily Dearborn this morning. Went away prepared—she with her travelling baggage with her. Went away together. Of this there can be no doubt. It is a sad certainty.

"And, worst of all, he went away with a lie on his lips. To effect his purpose the more securely, he deliberately lied to me—to his father.

"Oh! my son, my son, that was the heaviest blow of all. I could have condoned all else. I could even have forgiven that girl—who has brought such ruin upon us—forgiven her as his wife," he continued.

"Oh! Henry. It may not be that—I cannot believe it. He may have merely gone for a drive with her.

"What is your information? May it not be mere idle talk? Who saw them?" queried Mrs. Mordaunt, with departing hope, however, fading from her face, and belying her words.

"I wish I could believe it were not that, but I cannot," he replied, mournfully.

"I will tell you all I know, and you can then judge for yourself, that you will not see him to-night. "Last night, late, he came to me, came to tell me that my advice of the afternoon had been taken by him ; that he, in deference to my expressed wish, would give up all thought of that girl, but that it was necessary for him, the better to do it, to leave home for a time. He would return, he said, to college friends in the West, and remain with them until term commenced ; and he asked for money for this purpose—to travel—to pay his college fees and other purposes. He asked me for six hundred dollars, and I, delighted at his dutiful acquiescence to my wishes, and desiring to help him in every way, gave him a thousand.

"He told me, then, that he would go to Cascades to-day, to make some arrangements, I believe, he said, but that he would be back home early.

"I believed in the truth and loyalty of my son, as a father should do, had nothing to object, and he went away this morning.

"This afternoon, whilst I was with Vance, the man—a farmer living on the Cascades road, who saw their meeting, at whose house the girl, who is now his wife, had left the night before her travelling valise—came to me and told me the news, the unexpected and direful news, broad'y and openly stating their object ; and, Vance told me he had, to his surprise, met them at Cascades, going to the station for the southern train.

"I fear it is all too true, my darling," he continued, looking sadly into his wife's face.

Mrs. Mordaunt, for a few moments, answered not a word, but remained standing immovable, in the attitude in which she had at the first risen to her feet. At length, as if speaking to her own thoughts, she brokenly said—

"Oh ! Reggie, Reggie ! you have not done this thing ? You would not do it, my son, my darling. Henry, tell me, in mercy tell me, that our Reggie will be home with us, to-night ?"

"My poor wife ! We must bear the troubles that God sends, as we are taught by Him to bear them. Your son will not come to-night. His horses came an hour ago, driven by a man from the Cascades' Hotel, but our unfortunate son has not come. I need say no more."

Mrs. Mordaunt answered not a word ; with pale, drawn face, she sat down again at the side of her dying child, and bent down over the little sufferer, whose span was short for her ; by that movement, shewing that she gave up her son, and drew to herself every precious moment of the little life she was losing,

Through the long, sad hours of the night : long in their agony, yet how short with the dreadful end they brought nearer—nearer—nearer—the father and mother kept their vigil. The mother's hand convulsively clasping the little nerveless fingers of her child—so soon to be God's child.

Both watching with agonized eyes the fainting breath, weakening—weakening—dying—gasping away. The glazing—the dread dimness stealing over the the beautiful dark eyes, that to them, had been so bright, so full of joyful life and expression.

Watching for the dread approach of the dark, silent angel of Death ; the awful moment ; how awful to the strained hearts of the loving parents, helpless in their misery, who would freely have given up all—all the world, all the world could give—to avert the dread inevitable, when the last breath is yielded, and their child, theirs no more on earth.

With the first silvery streaks that lightened the dawn, the little face stiling from pain, lightened up with a soft smile, the last tracing of the pure soul, opening from clay, as it rose to meet its God. Their little child was dead—but was she not now God's little child ?

As, with bowed heads and tearful eyes, they stood and prayed over the quiet form, so lovely in its peaceful death, their hearts were dead within them, but for the grand consolation, she is

God's child ! ever His child ! more than ever His child now ! with Him for ever ! at rest !

Of that there could be no doubt ; no doubt of that sweet salvation, In this they knew, above their smarting wounds, they knew that their little Ally was well again. Better than the world could make her. An angel—their angel—they had an angel in Heaven.

To them alone was left pain ; to her, ineffable bliss.

But, though the firm truths, the grand beliefs of religion can comfort and strengthen, they cannot altogether remove such bitter griefs as these. The poor, loving human hearts, though unselfish and softened in so many attributes, cannot be so wholly sublimed above the pangs which death, striking the loved ones, so rackingly inflicts, as to see the prompting mercy that directs the dark angel's hand, and rise above the agony, to say "It is not loss."

The ennobling and purifying doctrines of Christianity that teach the love of all things, teach, also, the highest and purest love. The softening influence makes our earthly affections the deeper and stronger.

But when those affections are put to the dire test, when death strikes, that kind influence may comfort and strengthen to bear the blow, and is the healing balm to the gaping wound, yet who amongst us could force back the bitter tear, and unlamenting say, "It is not a loss."

So it was with the Mordaunts. Their sorrow for the death of their child was very profound. It was the first time that death had come home to them, and their first agony was great enough that their other troubles were dulled to them. The absence of their son, and its cause, would have been felt as a great grief, had it not been swallowed up by more terrible and greater. Had it not been that the death of their little child was so overwhelming a blow in its dire suddenness, their son's misfortune—as they could not but consider it—would have been a very dread-

ful one to them. But their feelings were mercifully numbed towards the lesser by the greater grief. But that grief was bitter enough, and dreadful enough.

The little Ally—lying on her white bier, in the soft loveliness which Death enwraps his child-victims was a peace-maker. The terrible sorrow of her loss benumbed, the smarting wounds of the parent's hearts, which their son had given.

Her little form, still and quiet—voiceless, but for the wreathing smile that had marked the heavenly transit—a softening peace-maker, that came between the son's deception, his fatal folly, and the parent's natural resentment.

When, during the evening of the day on which Ally died, a letter from Reggie came, the hearts of the father and mother, as they stood beside their lost darling, and recognized that she was, to them, an angel, were softened, and the resentment and anger died away. Through their little peace-maker. Reggie was forgiven, though he could not be restored.

He was still their son, and though he had cut himself away very effectually from them, yet their love burned warmly for him, and all that concerned him was of vivid interest to them. Therefore, sorrowfully and reluctantly—for it seemed like profanation to their little one's memory, to enter on the things of the world—they withdrew to read the letter that confirmed the loss to them of their son. Its words were few enough, and could not, of necessity, be agreeable to those to whom they were addressed.

“ROCHESTER, N. Y., Oct. 7th, 1873.

“MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER :

“You will, doubtless, be much surprised to learn by this time, that I am married. I have to fear—although I hope my fear may be groundless—that you will not be pleased to learn for I know that you are prejudiced against Emily. But what was I to do? I could not live without her; and, we are married. My happiness depended upon Emily, and, knowing that your consent was hopeless, I, for my own sake, had to take the step

which has secured it. When you come to really know the worth of my sweet wife, as I know it, you cannot but acknowledge that I was right. Meanwhile, I have to entreat your forgiveness, which we will, in person, solicit before many days.

"We were married this evening, and, I snatch a few moments to write to you, to beg your consideration, and tell you of our happiness. My sweet wife—your new daughter—joins with me in what I say, and in love to you, and Ethel, and Ally, who, we hope, is better.

"I hope my dear father will pardon me for what occurred between us in the drawing-room, yesterday morning. I was in a strait, and hardly knew what I was saying. When he sees my happiness, and knows the goodness and worth of my beautiful wife, he will, I am sure, forgive me.

"You may expect us in a few days. Under the circumstances, and uneasy to see you as I am, we will hurry home very shortly, instead of making a long trip, just now, though we may, after our meeting, spend our honey-moon in travel.

"With best love to all, from your new daughter, as well as from myself,

"I am, my dear parents,

"Your affectionate son,

"REGINALD MORDAUNT."

This was Reggie's extraordinary letter. Extraordinary in the confident tone which pervaded it, in spite of all.

"Poor fellow! how deceived he is, but it is all very dreadful," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Deceived! He will never have a day's happiness with that woman. But they cannot come here; I shall never allow her to be received into my house," answered her husband.

"Oh! Henry, but we must see Reggie sometimes. He is our son after all. But I agree with you that his wife can never come to this house," hastily replied Mrs. Mordaunt.

"But you must write at once, if they are not to come here. Write kindly, my dear husband, though he has done wrong and ruined his own happiness, as well as struck at ours, yet he is our son, and he will have trouble enough soon. We must forgive

our wrong, for our little angel's sake, whom he will never see more. Oh ! Ally, my little daughter."

"Florence, my darling, our little one shall make peace between us and our son. Poor fellow, he will need it sorely enough. I will write a few words to-night to prevent their coming, for Emily Mordaunt, as she is now, shall not enter this house," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

After a little further conversation and consultation the following letter was written and sent to the post office to save the night's mail.

"LAKE MORDAUNT, — 1873.

"MY DEAR SON,—

"For such you still are, although you have separated yourself so completely from us, and have, I fear, as completely ruined your own happiness by your most miserable marriage.

"I have but little to say in reply to your letter, save that it is impossible for us to receive you, with your wife, as you seem to expect.

"Emily Mordaunt can never, with my consent, enter the door of my house, and I write this on the instant of learning your whereabouts, to let you know this, my unalterable determination.

"As to your marriage I will say nothing, will leave you to discover for yourself its results.

"Your little sister is dead. Died this morning. In mercy to you I shall say no more than to give you the sad tidings.

"I shall not leave you to starve, neither shall your wife find that she has made a rich marriage. I shall pay over to you henceforth one thousand dollars per annum, which is more than many worthy clergymen have to subsist upon.

"If you have any energy or ambition about you, you will have an opportunity thus, to advance yourself, but you need expect nothing further from me.

"I need not tell you that both your mother and myself are most bitterly grieved and disappointed—most bitterly grieved.

"I repeat again that not under any circumstances shall your wife be received at Lake Mordaunt.

"You have our forgiveness, my son, for the wrong you have done us, and our sympathy for the wrong you have done your-

self. Your little sister, lying upon her bier, is the peacemaker who has brought you this forgiveness, disarmed our resentment and caused us to extend the helping hand, that might not otherwise have been extended. Your wife we simply ignore—to do aught else would be treason to yourself and to others as dear to us as you are.

"I cannot advise you in your new life, though I much fear advice is necessary to you. I shall abstain from interference in your affairs.

"Your mother sends her love to you, her sorrowing and prayerful love, and your father joins with her. Ethel knows nothing as yet, and she has sufficient grief already without increasing it until she is better able to bear it.

"I am, my dear Reggie,

"Your affectionate father,

"HENRY MORDAUNT."

"Are you not too severe towards him, my dear husband? I mean as to some of the expressions of the letter. You are liberal enough pecuniarily. Could you not have written more kindly?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, looking up with tears in her eyes to her husband's face.

"No, Florence. It is better as it is. The sooner he learns his real position the better. Poor fellow! he will soon enough, I fear, find out what a fool's paradise he has entered.

"With the wife he has taken he will not find the thousand dollars a year too liberal, nor will she either, that is one comfort; she will not find her adventure a rich one.

"Let the letter go as it is," he continued, and the letter was sent.

"It is doubtful though," said Mrs. Mordaunt, after a pause, during which her mind had been engaged with the painful subject they had discussed, "it is doubtful though if he receive the letter. They will not in all probability remain any time in that place.

"They may not start at once for home, yet they will hardly remain there, for you may be sure that she will not consent to forego her pleasure trip," said Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Well! I hope he will get it," replied her husband. "I sincerely hope so, as it will save unpleasantness to all of us."

CHAPTER VI.

ADA SPEAKS.

When Mr. Edwin Vance had driven away from Lake Mordaunt after his very unsatisfactory interview with its owner, he did so mechanically and with much the same consciousness of volition about the act as he had about putting on his hat on going out of the door. He drove away simply because it was as obviously necessary a thing for him to do as the putting on his hat had been. It was the first thing for him to do and he did it, though without any purpose or defined idea.

Whither he was going, or what should be his next step, he knew not, had not thought, and his excited and disquieted brain was probably hardly in a state to form at once a rational or connected idea about the matter. So he simply drove away.

He found himself, as it were, placed in the position of one suddenly started upon a totally unexpected journey, for which he was wholly unprepared, and of which he had never thought, not even knowing whither he was bound or what direction his steps should tend. Conscious only that he was moving and that there was an end to attain, though without a guiding circumstance or ray of light to show how it was to be attained, moving on simply because there was naught else left for him to do.

He would have much preferred *not* to have driven away as he did, from Lake Mordaunt, for many reasons, as may be imagined; but the force of circumstances was too urgent, and he could not remain.

He had to go forth, unprepared and unaided by anything, save a name, towards the elucidation of the mystery that had shrouded his own and his Ethel's happiness.

He drove on then mechanically for some time, his mind bent upon the strange interview through which he had passed, and its equally strange incidents, recalling and pondering uselessly every word that had fallen and every event that had been related to him, but at the same time gradually quieting and composing his excited nerves and bewildered brain into method and order that would develope and centre again upon a purpose.

At length he awakened from his reveries to find himself close upon the village of Ten Lakes, having unknowingly passed the road to Cascades, from whence he had come, and as he hesitated as to whether he should turn back towards it or continue on, it flashed upon his mind that Mr. Mordaunt had named Emily Dearborn to him as the preferrer, or possible authoress, of the charges that had come between him and his love and that it was possible he might obtain by some chance or other a clue, some trace or stray scrap of information that might be of service to him, and as he had no more particular purpose in directing his uncertain steps to Cascades than to any other place in his present state of doubt, he resolved to endeavour a meeting with some of the Dearborn family and try for results.

He therefore drove up to the hotel, consigned his team to the ostler who had served him on a previous occasion, and went into the house to consider his next move.

After ordering dinner, he started out on a voyage of discovery, intending to call at the Dearborns' residence in case he met none of the family, making for himself the pretext that he might hear something of interest, though that was hardly probable in Emily's absence. The real motive perhaps for delaying in Ten Lakes was its neighborhood to his Ethel, and his unwillingness to tear himself away under circumstances so distressingly unsatisfactory.

As he strolled up the street his thoughts on the subject were arrested by the sudden drawing up beside him of a carriage,

and the fresh young voice of Ada Dearborn, who with a younger brother occupied it, fell on his ear.

"Oh! Mr. Vance," she said, "I am so glad to see you. Have you come from Lake Mordaunt to-day?"

"Yes, Miss Ada," he replied, going up to the carriage and shaking hands with its fair occupant. "I have but just returned. I only remained an hour, however. I am sorry to say they are in great distress there. Poor little Alida, I was horrified to learn, is on her death bed. Had you heard it?"

"Yes, Mr. Vance, I had heard it from the doctor, and could hardly believe it. How very dreadful for them all, and I fear there is an added grief for them in prospect.

"Was Reginald at home, may I ask? I really have a strong motive for the question, Mr. Vance," said Ada, who Vance now noticed, wore a disturbed and disquieted look upon her usually bright and laughing face.

"No, he was not, Miss Dearborn. I met him in Cascades to-day to my surprise, as he was in——" and Edwin hesitated, suddenly remembering he was addressing the sister of the companion of Reggie's flight.

"In Cascades," repeated she. "Was he alone? Did you see that he was alone? Oh! believe me, that I ask from no improper motive, but it would be a great relief to me to know that he was alone," continued Ada, excitedly, and with a hot colour in her face.

Edwin Vance paused a moment ere he replied. "My dear Ada, I think I know to what you allude by your question, and I fear my answer will not be as you would wish it; that will be no relief to you. I met——"

"Then my sister was with him?" interrupted Ada. "Pray have no hesitation in telling me, Mr. Vance, of the disgraceful fact. If it is so we have disgrace enough before us that you need not hesitate to tell me," continued Ada looking half de-

fiantly, half tearfully, at the rather painfully situated young gentleman before her.

"Yes! Miss Emily Dearborn was with him. I met them at the railway station, and was somewhat surprised at meeting them though I was so occupied with anxieties of my own that I paid but little attention to aught else. I do not see though, my dear Ada, that you should couple disgrace with the fact, to yourselves at any rate, for I may add that, whilst with Mr. Mordaunt this afternoon, some information was brought him, not very reliable however, that they were on their way to be married, and that in all probability ere this, your sister is Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt."

"Is not that disgrace sufficient for me—for all connected with her? Think a moment! Will it not be said, and said with truth, that my sister, a portionless girl, has taken advantage of the youthful inexperience of an unformed boy, the only son of very wealthy people, to entrap him into a most unsuitable marriage; an elopement planned by herself to secure a rich marriage. Is not that disgrace sufficient, Mr. Vance? And then that this hateful affair should take place at the very time when his little sister is dying.

"How dreadful for him—for all of them! My sister, I am ashamed to say, will be the only one who will not feel the disgrace, who will feel nothing but exultation at the success of her plans. But, Mr. Vance, now that we are upon this painful subject, may I ask you a question? A question relative to yourself and your own affairs, but which now interference on my part—the sister of Emily Dearborn—might not be unjustifiable, as it might possibly render you a service. Are your relations with your affianced bride, Ethel Mordaunt, as happy as they were when I was at Lake Mordaunt—as happy as they should be? Whether you answer me or not, Mr. Vance, I shall tell you what I have to tell and which the dreadful event of to-day,

empowers me to tell," and Ada looked up into his face as if awaiting his reply.

"No, Ada, they are not so happy as they were. Very different indeed. Through false representations, the exact nature of which, by reason of Miss Mordaunt's illness, I suppose, I am not able as yet to ascertain, our engagement is broken off, and I am almost at my wits end. All that I could learn to-day was that these representations emanated from your sister, I am very sorry to say, and as I know them to be false, I am compelled to consider that she cannot be guiltless in the matter."

"Your engagement broken off! Oh! Mr. Vance can it be so bad as that?" exclaimed Ada, in an accent of horror, and shrinking back into herself as if struck by a blow.

"Did you say positively that Emily was concerned in it, that it emanated from her? Oh! it is too horrible.

"Mr. Vance," she continued, hurriedly, "if you know yourself to be innocent towards your affianced, you can look upon it as a truth that Emily Dearborn is at the bottom of your trouble. I have heard her threaten Ethel's happiness; from vague hints I have for some time feared that she meant, if she could, to work mischief against your engagement, but when she became engaged to Reginald, as she has been for some weeks to my knowledge, I supposed, as I might very naturally be expected to suppose, that all such ideas would be relinquished by her. You can blame her for all. You need look no further, save that in all probability Sidney Wolverton was in league with her, or was —"

"But what possible motive could she have, Ada? That is what I cannot understand. I certainly have never injured her that she should do so frightful a harm," interrupted Edwin, excitedly. "It seems so inexplicable."

"Not inexplicable at all. She probably wished that you should have married her instead, and was jealous; she hated Ethel.

He ambition has always been to marry a rich man, dreadful as it appears that I, her sister, should have to say it.

"Mr. Vance, I will do what I can to help you to right yourself, for Ethel's sake, but to-day I am too much disturbed. I must go home and tell my parents what has befallen them. We have been very anxious all day since we missed Emily, as there were suspicious circumstance connected with her absence.

"Call at our house to-morrow, and I will see you farther upon this dreadful matter. For the present I must say 'farewell,' and without waiting for another word Ada drove off with her round-eyed little brother, who had occupied himself during the interview in staring fixedly upon Edwin, and now turned his chubby face over his shoulder to continue his pleasing pursuit so long as the object of his gaze remained in sight.

Edwin Vance, thoroughly astonished at the things he had heard, gazed after them with a round-eyed stare almost equalling that by which he was stared at, until, recovering himself, he turned back to the hotel to eat his dinner with what appetite he could muster, and revolve the new lights of his position in his mind, endeavoring to extract a small modicum of hope out of them. He was determined, however, to remain where he was for the present, and await further developments, and he had not found his visit to Ten Lakes altogether in vain.

There we will leave him, and turn to another scene of our story.

CHAPTER VII.

EMILY'S HONEYMOON.

Emily Mordaunt, the bride of a day old, was a very different woman from the Emily Dearborn of but two days ago, secure in her marriage. Her fears had gone, and with her fears had gone also the recollection of them. For her the consequences

that had seemed so frightful but two short days since no longer existed. Done with the past it was at once swept away from her mind and forgotten.

Of what further avail the slain dragons that could no longer appal her present. Away with them. Away with the dead possibilities of spent minutes, and place, for the aptitudes of the living and striking hour.

Her confidence in herself and her own powers had returned, and with it had set in again the full tide of her ambition.

Now that the dread of personal danger to herself, under which she had been the veriest coward, had passed away, her active brain—disdainful and unappalled by moral terrors—commenced again, the first day of her married life, when other girls would have been wrapt up in the soft dreamings of romance, its schemings and plottings for advancement and self-aggrandizement.

The security which her marriage gave her, had brought her back her strength, but with that strength had come, even thus early—this first day of her honey-moon—a slight feeling, a tinge, but perceptibly distinct and recognized, a feeling of regret for the step she had taken, for her marriage, not yet a day old.

For was not the full and swelling tide of her ambition now hemmed in, pent and confined within the narrow bounds which her marriage to Reggie Mordaunt had set in impassable limits before her. Into the narrow reach left her, must that swelling tide of striving hope be cribbed, where before was the limitless ocean for its expansion.

But if a feeling of regret for the step, that but so lately had seemed a necessity, was present to her, there was equally present the fact that the step had been taken, and its consequences inevitable.

She was married, and she recognized that her marriage placed bounds ; gave inevitable and changeless direction to her ambitious desires.

She was a Mordaunt ; the course of her life was fixed, and she was sufficiently aware that if she was to rise at all, that rise must be through her young husband and his family.

Her energies were bounded, though her ambition was boundless. But when within this narrow reach, its swelling tide was confined, its waters heaped up and pressed within their limits, would not their concentrated and forceful power be the stronger, reach the farther, and rush the faster to the objects desired ?

Emily Mordaunt was herself again.

The beautiful young bride—sitting in the handsome parlor of a Rochester hotel, the afternoon of the day succeeding her marriage, pondered on these things. The bride of a day old found her delights in the unromantic schemes of personal advancement, as though her marriage had been ten years back, instead of a few hours.

Her aims were distinctly before her in her mind's eye, and the achievement of those aims occupied her thoughts to the exclusion of all softer emotions.

The loving attentions and delighted talkings of her young husband at her side were to her evils—necessary evils it might be—which had to be endured, but evils, nevertheless, distracting her from the things of greater importance.

He was demonstrative, enthusiastic in his happiness, careless of consequences and of the future, wrapt up in his fair bride, and his dream of romance, eager to make manifest his love, and hungering for its return.

He had obtained his beautiful Emily, and he was happy, but his happiness sprang from himself alone. Could he have analyzed his sensations, he would have found that he was happy, because he felt that he ought to be happy, having obtained that, which the prospect of obtaining, had seemed so happy.

"Emily, my darling," he said, "have you written to them at Ten Lakes, yet, to tell them of our happiness?"

"No, Reggie ! not yet, Where is the hurry?" she replied, carelessly, in the midst of her dreams.

"But they will feel so anxious about you, you know. You were very particular that I should write home, yesterday ; directly that we were married—and, why——"

"That was different, altogether," she interrupted.

"It is very important, for us that every means should be taken to conciliate your parents and reconcile them to our marriage. They do not like me, as it is, but they fondly love you, their only son, and it would be very poor policy on our part, not to wipe away any bitterness they may feel through our marriage, by every attention to them and their feelings.

"And, we have begun well. Your letter to them was just the thing, dutiful and affectionate, yet taking your own grounds," continued Emily, praising herself, however, for she had inspired the letter, while seeming to praise her husband. "*My* father and mother, on the contrary, will be pleased enough, and we need not be so particular with them."

"Oh, Emily, you should not speak in that way of them ; I know I shall be just as glad to hear from them that they forgive us for marrying as we have done, as to hear the same from my own parents. But they will be so anxious about you, and alarmed at your unexplained absence. There will be so much talk made; if the matter is not known. I never could face it all," he said.

"There will be talk enough, as it is," she thought to herself, "writing will not help that, I expect. Much I'll care for the facing of it."

"Well, Reggie, unlike most brides, I am ready to give up the greater part of my wedding tour, in order to go back at once," she continued, aloud. "Partly to agreeably surprise my own friends, but mostly to do the agreeable, be the agreeable, and seek reconciliation from your's. The sooner we visit Lake Mordaunt, the better," she added, decisively. "The less time

we give them to think over the matter, before obtaining their forgiveness to that which they cannot now help, the better, also. Instead of going on to New York, to-night, as we arranged, let us change the programme by shortening it. Let us go to Montreal, instead, remain over the morrow, and thence on to Ten Lakes, and Lake Mordaunt. Had you not better make arrangements, Reggie, see about a train and other details, that fall to a gentleman's share?"

"I am sure that I cannot see what makes you so very anxious to get back, Emily, for I do not think you will find it so very pleasant, with my people, at all events. We had far better wait for a few days, and enjoy ourselves, until we hear what is likely to be our reception. Let us go on to New York, as we had agreed, and return this way for our letters," replied Reggie, who did not fancy an immediate interview with his father, much preferring the enjoyment of his new-found happiness, away from the possibility of angry reproach.

"I can very well predict the nature of our reception, my dear Reggie, and I am prepared for it. Of course, equally with yourself, I should have preferred the pleasure of a honeymoon season, did not the circumstances render it best for us to forego the enjoyment. It is very important, absolutely necessary in fact, that we should have things placed upon a proper footing with your parents, and I can see no better means of success, than by at once presenting ourselves before them."

Emily said this a little imperiously, as if her mind were made up that it should be as she wished. She continued—

"We must be very particular to avoid the least appearance of carelessness or neglect towards them. The sooner we meet, the better chance of regaining their good-will, towards yourself, at least."

"Very well then, my own Emiiy. If it pleases you, it shall please me, though we are, in my opinion, giving up our pleasure uselessly. It is but a question of time with them at Lake Mor-

daunt, and when they come to know you, my darling, how will they wonder at their cruel prejudice."

With these words, Reggie surrendered to his beautiful wife, with the reward of a kiss—the infliction of which she suffered, as a matter of course—a penalty of the easy gaining of her point.

"We shall not be at home for two days yet, that is one blessing!" he continued, as he left the room.

"Well, my cards are pretty hard to play," soliloquized Mrs. Reggie Mordaunt, as she seated herself again comfortably, upon her husband's exit, "and I need not count upon much effective assistance in the playing from my young worse-half, either, that seems certain. To manage these Mordaunts, will prove an enterprise of difficulty, and I have to do this work alone," she continued. "The sole aid that ingenious Reggie can bring me, is the love of his parents for him. That must overcome their dislike to myself, in some measure, at least.

"If I but carry on my affairs properly, I shall soon have the mother round upon our side. She may be the bitterest against me for a few days, but she will not hold out long against her own, especially as there is no remedy.

"I shall find my generalship more called into play with the father and Ethel. Cool, quiet, and determined, as is the former, a decision once arrived at will be long maintained, while in Ethel, I shall have a bitter enemy. But she is, fortunately, yet too ill and weak to be very formidable, and the sooner the first meeting with them is accomplished, the sooner will they become accustomed to the new order of affairs with Reggie, and the less opportunity will Miss Ethel have to undermine us.

"Of course, our reception will not be a pleasant one, that is to be expected, even Reggie knows that, but what do I care? I know how to bear the disagreeables, to put the disagreeables to use, also.

"The sense of my triumph over them, shall keep me cool, if

nothing else would ; the first impressions that I, as Emily Mordaunt, will leave behind me, shall not be unfavourable, at all events, in the light of their son's wife. Reggie shall be happy in his wife, for that occasion, and it shall be apparent that he is happy.

"If I can manage that the first few weeks shall pass well with us, I can count Ethel out of the game. I shall have nothing more to fear from her, she is effectually disarmed in the Vance affair, by my marriage, and, as time runs on, she will be left to herself, to nurse her griefs alone. They will become stale, as fresher events rise to the surface, to more immediately interest those who are not the active sufferers.

"Mrs. Mordaunt, too, day by day, will blind herself to all save that I am Reggie's wife, and Reggie happy with me. All unfavourable impressions will disappear in the end, before these facts in the mother's eye. From being an enemy, she will become an ally, and Ethel's woes shall take a secondary place—in her estimation—to Reggie's grievances, which shall be kept ever present before her.

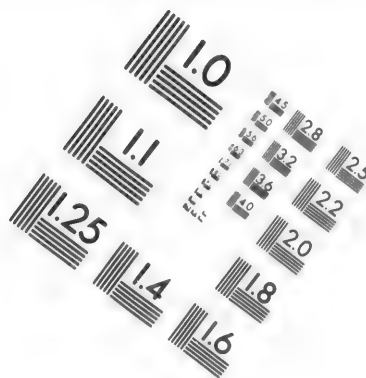
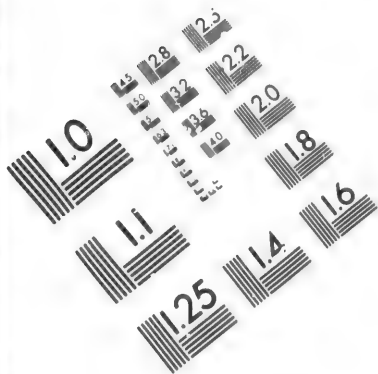
"If I can but keep things so that Mr. Mordaunt shall not displace Reggie in his will and be tolerably liberal in the meantime it is about as much as I can well hope for from him.

"I can try, however, for greater things, and as I have but little else to do but try, there is no saying how far successful I may be. The Lake Mordaunt property shall be mine in the end. By hook or by crook I will have it, nor shall it be my fault if, in the end, the greater part of the Mordaunt wealth does not fall to Reggie also.

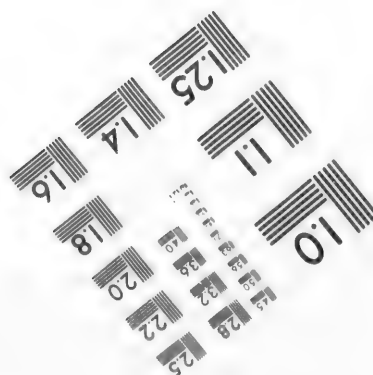
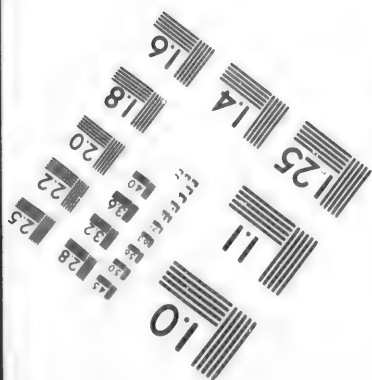
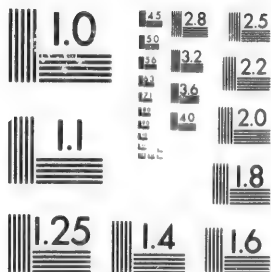
"Ethel, in all probability, will die an old maid. If I can keep the quarrel with Vance alive, to a certainty she will pass into that unenviable condition.

"If I can prevent it, she shall not marry Vance. She will never marry another, and her fate is tolerably sure.

"I am a Mordaunt now—one of them—an important mem-



**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



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ber of the family, one whom they will have to consider, and if I do not mistake myself very considerably, I am the best of them also, in so far as capability is concerned.

"I rather imagine though that that is not altogether their impression," she continued with a laugh.

"I am a pariah in their eyes, an outcast, I suppose.

"Well! perhaps I deserve to be so considered by them, but it shall be all the worse for them that I remain so.

"The triumph is with me at present. The defeat and loss with them. It shall not be my fault if still the tide of my success flows not on to the full.

"Notwithstanding all the serious errors which I committed in the Vance affair, all my plans have prospered.

"Even though events have not turned out as I intended, I have prospered.

"To have married Reggie Mordaunt so soon, if at all, was hardly upon the programme, but it became necessary, and, so far, I see no reason for much dissatisfaction.

"The prizes are not in my grasp; the long fight for them is still to be fought, yet in the end I shall stand the victor.

"If Edwin Vance had not met with Ethel Mordaunt I should have married him I think. Not very difficult for me would it have been to have fanned into a flame the sparks of interest, very obvious interest, which she diverted from me and lost to me.

"She takes nothing by her motion, however, as a lawyer would say. I have non-suited her with a vengeance.

"If I did not obtain that which I desired, neither is she to be congratulated. It is, too, of greater importance to her than to me, for my heart—I suppose I possess one—is not touched in the matter. The blow falls very easily upon me, but for her there is no recovery unless she regains her lover, and that I do not intend she shall do.

"Yet it would have been better for me in every way if I

could have married Vance. He would have made a good woman of me. I should have been a good wife to him, while now —

“Well! I suppose I shall have to be a good wife to Reggie, in order the better to fight my worthy father and mother-in-law, yet the process, I suppose, will not be conducive to making me any better than I am at present.

“That cannot be helped, and I dare say I shall remain very contented in my normal state of badness.

“The *rolé* of a good woman, after all, would hardly be congenial to me.

“I wonder, too, what Sidney Wolverton will say to my metamorphosis?

“He will not like it, that is very certain, but he will have to put up with it. I should have been a fool to have married him, though I could easily enough have loved the man, villain as he is.

“Yet my marriage with Reggie Mordaunt, not a rich one, and with but little love on my part, is preferable to the fate of becoming Sidney Wolverton's wife.

“And he is a villain, an unmitigated villain. Though I am not a pattern of saintliness myself, yet I should find it very difficult to continue love for one whose villainies have descended to mean villainies.

“And his villainies are certainly not of the heroic order.

“No! I am better as the wife of good-natured, simple Reggie, even though I do not greatly love or highly respect him. Still, he is not a villain.

“In the end, I shall have wealth, and power, and influence. The wealth of the Mordaunt's, and the power and influence which I am very well able to derive from such, shall well content me.

“Meanwhile, I shall find my happiness and my occupation in striving for their early attainment. Yes, it is better to press on

homeward, at once, and get beyond uncertainty into assurance of the ground upon which we at present stand.

"I'll beard the Mordaunt lion in his den, despite portentous growls anticipatory. I will be a dutiful child, begging forgiveness; throwing up my hands, and saying, 'It was all for love; how then can you blame us?' for the mollification of the outraged parental heart.

"And it will be very strange if I do not mollify in the end the prejudices of these people. I shall endeavour to conduct myself, and to so lead Reggie, that their dislike of me be not increased, at any rate. It will be very odd, indeed, Emily Mordaunt, if you do not, before very long, wipe all that out.

"At any rate, I shall see what line I shall have to take in my warfare, my coming fight. For open battle, or smiling truce, I am equally ready. I am on the vantage ground as the wife of their son, success is but a question of time, and I can endure the meagre present in the prospect of the rich future.

"To drill Reggie into his part is the next thing that I shall have to do, for he will be an important player on the board. There must be no blustering or heroics to mar the day in his demeanour.

"He shall be happy in his wife, and they shall see it. They shall see too, that although earnestly desirous that his family ties remain unbroken, his wife comes first with him, his family next.

"The task with him is easy enough for me. I can mould him to my hand as I please. I would that all the rest were as facile.

"Now I shall go and prepare for the journey. I shall not write to them at home, it will be preferable to meet them, personally, and I am afraid to let that sneak, Ada, know anything more than I can help, until I get her disarmed by her mother's authority. They will suspect what has happened, but they cannot know certainly, and I prefer to tell my own story."

Such was the course of Emily's reflections, and in similar strain they were continued, as she made her preparations, until interrupted by her young husband's return.

"Well, Reggie," she said, as he entered her room in search of her, "what is to be the order of our proceeding? When do we start? I am all ready."

"There is a train at seven," he replied, "and if we go by it, we shall reach Montreal in the morning; but I really cannot see the necessity for our return at once. We are going to meet those disagreeables which we can just as well encounter later. Our marriage ought 'o bring us a few days' freedom from such; at any rate, Emily, I always imagined that young ladies set great store upon a long marriage tour, and why we—"

"But I do not, Reggie," interrupted his wife. "It has no romance or pleasure for me under the circumstances, nor do I see that it need for you, either. I am very happy as it is, and have you not me to comfort you under the deprivation. No, it is better for us that we return and meet them a'l, as soon as possible. Why should we fear disagreeables? For to do so, is to admit that our marriage was wrong, and that I do not imagine either would wish to admit. The only solid ground of complaint that your friends can have is that you are yet very young to enter upon the responsibilities of married life. No very serious objection, and one that each day will make less. There can be nothing else tenable against us. I am a lady, certainly good-looking and accomplished enough to be your wife and their daughter-in-law. You think the same, I'm inclined to believe, Master Reggie. Quite good enough to enter into the Mordaunt family, grand as they think themselves," said Emily, with a bewitching little laugh, turning her pretty face towards her young husband.

In his physiognomy was plainly written the belief that she was an angel, though it is, on the whole, very doubtful that, had

any of his family been present, they would have endorsed his belief.

"Good enough ! Good enough for the Mordaunts ! I should think you are, Emily," exclaimed the enraptured young swain, who, to do him justice, loved dearly his beautiful, though unamiable wife.

"They should be proud that you are one of them," he continued. "It is but a miserable prejudice, for which I cannot account and will not forgive, that puts them into opposition to our happiness. But, no thanks to them though, they could not prevent that happiness. I cannot easily forgive their dislike to you, my darling, so unreasonable, so ridiculous towards one so beautiful and so good."

"But you must forgive it, Reggie, and you must make up your mind to go back cheerfully to meet them, as I wish you to do. It does not belong to you, it will not do for you, to resent that which your parents have the right to view from their own stand-point. It will not do for you, for either of us, to offend your father, or to widen the breach that may already exist. You must remember, too, that you have taken a wife, incurring new responsibilities, and you cannot afford to quarrel with those on whom your future so much depends. You must strive to regain, if it be lost, your status with them as their son, the happy relations which have previously existed. It is very necessary for us, and will not that condition of things, also, be very pleasant, Reggie ?"

"Yes, I admit the pleasantness, if it can brought about," replied Reggie, to his wife's address ; an address so very virtuous in its resentments, as to appear rather foreign to her real character.

"Why can it not be done ?" resumed Emily, waxing earnest in her purpose. "Can we not disarm their resentment by subduing our own, as we are in duty bound to do towards our parents, and by approaching them as children should approach an offend-

ed father and mother, seeking reconciliation that shall make all happy. We shall be doing that which is right, and we should not find the doing of it disagreeable. Again, Reggie, if you shew them that you are happy with your wife, will it not make them the happier, and reconcile them to you and her, to see it? If you show them that we are anxious to please and to consider them, will not they be pleased thereby? And are we not bound, both of us, to consider their feelings? You, the more especially, as their son, and, the fact of their great love for you binds you to consider them. Between their love for you, and their prejudice against me, they probably are not, at present, very happy; so we are bound, by striving to remove that prejudice, which alone our dutiful conduct can do, to ease the aching of their hearts.

"Such is my opinion of that which we have to do," she continued. "Besides, Reggie, you should, at least, let me have my own way upon my honeymoon days, and I wish to start homewards, this evening."

Emily asked this, but, at the same time, she was fully of the opinion that she would have her own way, not only on her honeymoon days, but after them, also.

"You are right, Emily, as you always are," he replied, gazing fondly upon his wife, whose face so brightly animated, seemed to express that her sentiments sprang from the deep convictions of her heart, in place of being, as they were, the mere words which her intellect prompted as the best to bring her husband over to her views.

"You have convinced me," he continued, "my own darling, if my father had heard your noble ideas, as I have now heard them, would he not be compelled to own his mis-conception of one so amiable and true?"

"But he did not hear them, Reggie, and if we wish the mis-conception removed, the sooner we commence, the better for all of us," quickly replied Emily. "We had better go down to

tea, however, as we have to start soon, and people on their honeymoon appear to become hungry as often as in ordinary every-day life."

"Very well, let us go down, then, and appease our hunger. One thing, though, is very certain, that hunger will not be a prominent sensation with me when, the day after to-morrow, I approach Lake Mordaunt, and my father's presence," answered Reggie, who laughed as he said the words.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SKY SHALL BRIGHTEN OE'R THE LITTLE GRAVE.

"Earth to earth ; ashes to ashes ; dust to dust."

Standing upon the edge of the little grave, that in a minute's space would shroud for ever a beloved form—that of his dead child—from earthly ken, the grand words of the burial service of the Church of England, so solemnly beautiful, sounded on the father's ears.

Sounded on his ears with a vast significance, a new and awful impress, that, to him, had never before been attained.

Great words that, until then, had never revealed to him the grandeur of their meaning.

Sounded in his ears, and heard with the tremendous interest of one to whom Death, for the first time, has come home ; snatching, for the first time, from the clinging grasp, the loved and dear ; ending, perforce, for this earth, the fatherly care—the loving care that was so bitter to end, that to have continued would have been so sweet.

Heard with the tremendous interest of one whose love, stretching beyond the impassable limits of the grave, listens with intent yearning to the glorious words of the Father, the Heavenly Father, who—taking his treasure, replacing his loving care—gives the grand promise of His better care.

"I am the Resurrection, and the Life !"

Though the splendid words, whose vastness reached his soul, as he stood at the last parting, to give up his child to his God, would not, on the instant, perhaps, wipe away the blinding tears, or heal up, at once, the wounded heart, yet did not the consoling Mercy, the vast Promise fall in its strength of sweetness, upon that heart whose earthly love so longed and yearned ?

Did not the father know then—know what before he had but believed—that his child was now God's child, and that it was well with her ?

Mr. Mordaunt, at the funeral of his little Ally, stood alone—alone in a crowd—for though the respect and liking in which he and his were held had sent a representative from every family, rich or poor, of the surrounding country, yet none of his own blood supported him, as with grieving heart, and moistened eyes he ended, with the grave, the earthly guardianship of his lost child. And amidst his grief—even amidst the hallowed interest, the awed softening that God's vast words, as the grand transfer to His guardianship was made, brought to him—he felt the loneliness ; not in anger, or repining, but that it was so. His friends, neighbours, and acquaintances from many a mile around, had followed, in long line, the bearing of his dead to the grave, and stood with him, as he paid the last earthly care, yet still he was alone. Where was his son that he was not at his side ?

He felt the absence.

When the last words were said—all left to him of his little child, a bright memory—he turned away to face again the business of life. He had to note, with a sharp sense of pain at the contrast—that, though his son had not been with him, the man whom his elder daughter loved, but had discarded and put from her, had stood by his side. He noted it, with the more pain, that he who was not called upon to do it, had done the thing, which he who was called upon to do it, had not done.

When he had passed out from the sacred grounds—how sacred now for him—he approached Edwin Vance, and in silence, for he could not yet trust his voice, yet with warm pressure shook the hand of the man who, though far enough away, at present, from being akin, and hardly-treated, perhaps, had yet remembered to do him and his this sad respect.

"I deeply sympathize with you, Mr. Mordaunt, with all of you, in your great sorrow," said Edwin, as he returned the friendly pressure. "For it is a great sorrow, even though we must know the bright certainty of your little child's Heavenly home. Her innocent little life has ended in assured salvation, of that we cannot doubt. Would that the closing of our lives of longer span might carry the same glorious certainty."

"Yes, that certainty shall be the consolation, and shall rob the blow of its bitterness. Our agonized love for her, lost to us, shall not carry the selfishness to wish our darling back again to this life of sin and misery, that thereby we be saved from grief," replied Mr. Mordaunt, as he slowly moved on by the side of Edwin.

"Would that all our griefs could bring the like consolations that are carried by little Aily's death," he continued. "I am ashamed to confess that my heart was not altogether free, to-day, from the bitter remembrances of my son's folly, and the scandal of his elopement. I hated and despised myself that, on this sad day, I could have borne such sentiments. I hated myself, that his absence, to-day, was resented, for when he left us, we, any of us, knew not of the danger hanging over our little one, and I should not have resented. They are married—we have heard from them. But all that, I suppose, is the town's-talk, at present."

"They were in Montreal, yesterday, so Ada Dearborn tells me," answered Mr. Vance. "But I have heard nothing further than that they are married."

"Poor Reggie, to whose future I had so looked forward and

planned. But my vanity is struck down," exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, speaking, however, more to himself, than to his companion.

And then followed a pause.

"I hope Mrs. Mordaunt and Eth— Mrs. and Miss Mordaunt are well, and able to bear the grief that has so hardly fallen to them," said Edwin, to change the sad conversation, and, perhaps, a little to hear of her he loved.

"Thank you, Edwin, Mrs. Mordaunt is well, and Ethel improving; but, as you can imagine, they are in sorrow. Ethel does not yet know of Reggie's marriage; we have not dared to tell her. She loves her brother dearly, while Emily she much dislikes and fears. The news would yet be too terrible a blow for her strength."

"And she has reason to fear her, Mr. Mordaunt. Very great reason, as have I, also," replied Edwin, with indignant warmth.

Then as he noticed the sudden-looking into his face, which his words had evoked, he continued—

"I should not say it, to-day, perhaps, at all events, but I have had a history from Ada, a plain history, which will, I think, carry conviction to you, as it is, knowing my own innocence, absolute certainty to me, that her sister, your son's wife, is the sole contriver of the mischief that has come in such dreadful manner to Ethel and to myself. Ada, who is as true and——"

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Mordaunt, "had it been Ada whom he had married, what a difference had it been? Then there would have been but the folly of their too youthful years to lament; a fault that time could correct. But with the scheming, wicked, and unprincipled woman to whom he has allied his promising youth, what a dreadful future has he not placed before himself?

"But what of Ada?" he continued.

"She regrets, she feels as bitterly, the event of this marriage, as you can do, Mr. Mordaunt. She holds down her head in shame at the recollection," answered Edwin.

"I admire and respect the young lady," he resumed, "who, while in her conscientious working-out of the duty laid upon her in the commands of her worldly-minded parents, concealed the things, which, if known, might have prevented the mischiefs which have taken place, yet, when the climax in your son's marriage with her sister had arrived, was not deterred from coming forward to do the right that was left possible for her to do. The marriage can not now be averted, but Ada, by telling me all she knows about the affair, has done all she could do to prevent further mischief, and to repair that already committed. That which she has told me, gives the direction, at least, in which to prosecute my efforts towards regaining what I have lost, and to right myself with Ethel, and all of you."

"What is it she has told you?" queried Mr. Mordaunt, in evident interest.

"That, from the first hearing of our engagement, Emily resented it, and determined to make mischief between us. That her visit to Lake Mordaunt, during its first days, took place that she might be on the spot to forestall it, if she could. That she did not intend, if she was able to prevent, that I should marry Miss Mordaunt, even had foul means to be employed," answered Vance, with fixed earnestness. "Ada has told me every unguarded expression of her sister with reference to us, with some very suspicious circumstances, of which she had become cognizant. Among them, that she had found her sister in the act of completing a letter, to which she had not attached her own name, but another. This name she had not been enabled to recognise, as Emily had snatched away the letter upon becoming aware that Ada was in the room. The latter is, however, positive that she

saw my name in the body of the letter. This circumstance looks the more suspicious, as it preceded, by a very few days, Miss Mordaunt's illness and my repudiation, the more so, when taken into account with Emily's unguarded threats against us.

"She also told me," continued Edwin, "that the engagement between her sister and your son was entered into before the family's departure for Cacouna, and though known to all her's, was kept secret from your family; on Ada's part, only by strict parental command, which she considered herself bound to obey. That Emily had no intention then of marrying Reggie at once, but only wished to have a hold upon him, in case events occurred which would make it a wealthy marriage for her, and she did not make a good match in the meantime. The hasty elopement and marriage, Ada explains by the probable supposition that Emily, having placed herself in a dangerous position by the acts which led to the breaking off of our engagement, became alarmed, and sought safety by an intimate alliance with the family she had injured, who possessed the evidence against her, and, who, of course, would suppress that which compromising one, would compromise all."

"Very likely, indeed, is Ada's explanation of the marriage. She has thrown light upon the whole story," said Mr. Mordaunt.

"Yes, a strong light, sir!" answered Edwin. "Could I but get a momentary sight of these papers which turned Miss Mordaunt from me, I could, at once, disprove them, and that—with Ada's evidence—should surely be sufficient to satisfy all of my innocence in this matter."

"I shall be satisfied, at all events, Mr. Vance, and you shall have these papers, if I can procure them for you," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

"But here is my carriage," he continued, "do you remain longer in Ten Lakes?"

"No, I think not, Mr. Mordaunt," answered Edwin. "I intend to run down to Montreal, to-night. If you can obtain the letters, or copies, would you kindly forward them to Toronto? Good-bye, sir, I trust we may meet again under more happy circumstances!"

Then they shook hands with each other, and were about to separate, when Edwin, turning back again, looked up at his Ethel's father for a moment, and, somewhat hesitatingly, continued—

"If I could get, to-day, a glance at these letters, it would materially aid me in my efforts at justification. Is Miss Mordaunt yet sufficiently well to be asked for them?"

"H'm—yes!" replied his companion, musingly. "She is quite well enough for that, now, and it would be better for her, for her mother, also, if, at this time, their thoughts were aroused to a subject connected with the interests of life. She shall be asked for them, to-day."

"But, could you not let me drive back with you to Lake Mordaunt, in order that I may see them, sir?" asked Edwin, hesitatingly, yet boldly enough, under the circumstances in which he stood. "If Miss Mordaunt is sufficiently well to be asked for the papers, would it not make her feel happier to know that I am guiltless?"

"Well, perhaps so! Jump in, Edwin, I cannot guarantee success, but I shall try."

Mr Mordaunt, with Edwin Vance beside him, drove back again to his desolate home.

But, although he went there, he could not get the letters for which he wished.

There was demur at first upon the part of Mrs. Mordaunt, and when that obstacle and Ethel's reluctance to enter upon the subject had been overcome, the letters could not be found.

Ethel could not remember where they were, or where she had put them, and a search ensued.

Her writing-case, work-boxes, jewel-casket, every possible receptacle likely or unlikely to contain such articles, were overhauled, but the letters could not be discovered.

Mrs. Mordaunt had felt incensed with Vance for coming, as he had, at such an unpropitious time, to their house, and she was the more anxious, now that she had commenced the search, to obtain the letters, that she might overwhelm him with the absolute proof of his villainy. Her inquisition for the missing papers was vigorous that she might the sooner get rid of the unwelcome visitor.

Ethel had not been informed of her dismissed lover's presence, and she evinced but little care in the search, thinking more of her lost little sister, than of her own concerns.

The father alone was deeply interested in the matter, that a gleam of brightness might be brought once more, by discovery of Vance's innocence to his darkened home.

While the search progressed up-stairs, he sat alone with his visitor in the library, each too anxious and uneasy for other than very disjointed conversation, and counting the minutes until Mrs. Mordaunt should appear with the desired objects of their search.

The latter had not yet been informed by her husband of Ada's revelations to Vance, so to him she had hardly been civil, or had spoken, with the result of making him still more disquieted and miserable. He, therefore, passed a sufficiently weary hour of waiting expectancy.

When at length the door opened, and Mrs. Mordaunt entered to give them the intelligence that the letters could not be found, he felt almost in despair. He had hoped so much from his visit, and now all had been in vain.

They had searched thoroughly, and re-searched minutely, but without success. Ethel could not remember aught further of their whereabouts than that she had them safely laid away somewhere, and that they were certainly in the house.

"Where can they be?" said Mr. Mordaunt, impatiently. "Has Ethel had them in her possession, since her illness, Florence?"

"No, of that I am sure! She could not have had them in her hands since the first day of her illness," answered his wife.

"Then she has hidden them, and forgotten about it, or they are in the room in which she held the interview with that girl, Emily. Let us go to search there for them," exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, hastily, and as hastily he left the room, motioning the others to follow.

Another search ensued, with no better success. Every paper, book, corner, article of furniture, receptacle, or object possible or impossible, was ransacked over and over, but still the same result.

No letters to be found.

Edwin Vance, in bitter disappointment, prepared to take his departure, no better off than when he had came to the house. He adjured Mr. Mordaunt in the most earnest and moving tones to have the search continued, and to find them, even if the whole house had to be turned topsy turvey in the effort.

He had bade his farewell, and had turned to leave the room, when a hasty ring upon the front-door bell sounded, voices were heard in the hall, and the next moment, Reggie Mordaunt and his wife stood before them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRIDE'S VISIT.

There was a pause—a pause of astonished surprise.

A pause of astonished surprise on the prior occupants of the room, and a not less surprise on the part, also, of one of the new comers, at least. This surprise was experienced by Emily

Mordaunt, for did not Edwin Vance, holding apparently the most friendly relations again, stand before her, in the house from which she thought she had for ever driven him?

She certainly was surprised, as were those she faced.

The pause, however, was but momentarily, for Reggie rushed forward, exclaiming—

“My dear father and mother, I have brought my wife to you, that we may ask and obtain your kind forgiveness for our——”

But his father advanced forward a step, and with a gesture, stopped his impetuous address.

“No more of that! Not another word! It is not for you to ask forgiveness, although, perhaps, for us to grant. What has brought you, Reginald, with your new-made wife, against my express command, to this house of mourning, which you have still further helped to desolate? Have you not received my letter?” he said, sternly, while he gazed full into his son’s face, as he stood where his footsteps had been arrested, a few feet in front.

“Letter! What letter? I have had no letter, father,” answered Reggie, confusedly and bitterly astonished.

“House of mourning! What do you mean? I do not comprehend,” he continued, and then his eye fell upon the deep, black attire of his mother.

“Do you not know that your little sister is dead? That while you stole away to your marrying, your sister lay dying? Your sister, Alida, is dead and buried.”

Sadly, solemnly, yet sternly, the father addressed these words to his son, upon whose ears they must have fallen with awful dread. His face blanched, his eyes lost their bright excitement, his head drooped as he heard them.

“Ally dead! Ally dead! It cannot be so. Oh! surely, surely, it cannot be that my little darling has gone. Mother! tell me, only tell me, that Ally is not dead, and I——”

Reggie broke down; he could say no more. The sad faces

before him told him all the tale which he would not believe—which could but be so dreadful for him to believe. Then, boy as he was, rushed into his mother's arms, his head down upon her shoulder, his voice, broken in agony, pouring out his laments, while his loving mother, straining the form of her son—erring, yet loved—to her heart, sobbed back to him her tale of agony.

"Poor boy, it is but a sad commencement of your new life," said his father, looking towards him with a softened eye, for a moment. Then, turning to Emily, who had remained standing quietly, as she had entered the room, "and now, madam, what has brought you to the house, when you must well know you are not welcome? Have you not done sufficient injury here already?" he said.

"Reginald and I have come to ask you for your forgiveness to us, and we did not know about poor little Ally, Mr. Mordaunt," answered Emily, sadly and slowly, as she raised her eyes, beautifully moist in their feigned sorrow, to his face.

"I suppose so," he replied, cuttingly. "You imagine then that it is not so utterly useless to ask my forgiveness, to your marriage with my son under such disgraceful circumstances, as it would have been to ask my consent to it.

"Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, as you have so unhappily become, I have decided—irrevocably decided—that I will not receive you into my house, and I shall keep my word," he continued, with raised voice. "You! You! who have not only lied and forged to destroy my daughter's happiness and almost taken her life, but have stolen from me my son. You are my son's wife, but never shall you be my daughter. I might have forgiven the marriage had you been as other girls are, but for you, as you are, Emily Mordaunt, there is no forgiveness. You are known—your sister has told all."

"My sister can have told nothing to my discredit, if she spoke the truth, Mr. Mordaunt," replied Emily, firmly, yet with a

quiet sadness in her voice. Nor have I lied and forged, as you assert. Neither have I stolen your son away from you. I married him because I loved him, and he loved me, and he is not the less worthy to be your son that I have married him. Nor am I unworthy to be his wife !”

As she said these words, Reggie turned from his mother to his wife, and, addressing his father, said, in violent excitement—

“ Father ! You shall not speak in such terms to Emily ; you may hate her, but——”

“ Reggie, do not speak so ; remember it is your father,” quickly interrupted his wife, and her shot was double-barrelled, arresting Reggie in his violence, as he sprang from his mother, and telling upon her assailant, who little expected such a speech from her.

Then, she continued, turning towards her husband's father, and speaking in a firm, but quiet and lady-like voice, “ Mr. Mordaunt, I perceive that my presence is disagreeable in this house, and I claim no rights here—I came with my husband to ask forgiveness for the step we have taken, independent and rash as it may have been ; it is not extended to us—so I will go and wait for him outside.”

“ There is no occasion for that, that you should go out to wait for him, Emily—Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt—I mean. Pray be seated, you can await Reggie here,” exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, hastily, as Emily had moved towards the door. Much as he disliked her, his spirit of hospitality could not brook what seemed so like turning her out of doors, and her demeanour during the interview had insensibly softened him.

As he placed a chair for her and motioned her into it, he continued, in a lowered voice, “ Madam, I do not wish to be unjust or cruel to you, but you have injured us most sorely. Still, all shall be forgotten and forgiven between us”—here he spoke with difficulty, and hesitatingly—“ and you shall restore your husband to his family and his friends again, if you but repair the great

wrong you have done, and heal—even if it be at the expense of a confession—the great unhappiness you have caused to my daughter and her affianced husband. Speak, I beg of you, before it is too late. We are already advanced upon the road to the discovery of the *plot*, hasten our steps, and what you say shall go no further than to those who are righted thereby.”

This address to Emily was not judicious on Mr. Mordaunt's part ; and he shewed himself but a bad tactician. It was not likely to have succeeded under any circumstances, and it was worse than useless, for he had let Emily see that the reconciliation that she had feared, had not yet taken place.

“ Mr. Mordaunt, if the restoration of my husband to his family, and your forgiveness is to be only obtained at such a price, we must learn to live without these blessings. You would have me accuse myself of foul play in the unfortunate difference between Mr. Vance and your daughter. I love my husband too well to procure his restoration to your favor at the expense of his wife's self-respect, and, necessarily, of his love, and he loves me too well to wish it. If Mr. Vance is innocent, it is easy for him to prove his innocence. It is not meet that I should be his scape-goat. Reginald, let us go, if you are ready. It is better that we should go at once.”

Reggie, who, in the earlier part of the interview, had been conversing with his mother, and during the latter episode had been detained by her to prevent the interference which his gathering anger menaced, now moved towards his wife, and in a loud voice, exclaimed—

“ Yes, Emily, my darling ! We will go ; you shall be insulted here no longer. They will all know you better some day, and then it shall come your turn to pardon. Perhaps, then, they——”

“ Stay, Reginald ! I wish to speak to you a moment ; I shall not detain you long,” and, taking him by the hand, Mr. Mordaunt led his son into the bay window, in whose recess they

were at once engaged in earnest conversation, and, as a cheque passed from the older to the younger man, it was probable that the ways and means of the new-married couple formed the subject.

Meanwhile, Edwin Vance, who during this interview had remained a silent, but very uneasy spectator, had been fidgetting about the room, as if knowing he should not remain in it, yet unwilling to leave it, now stepped forward to Emily, and calmly, yet courteously, addressed her—

“Would you be so kind as to inform me, Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, of the nature of the contents of the two letters concerning myself, which, upon the day of her illness, you laid before Miss Mordaunt? from whom they came? to whom they were addressed? and how they came into your hands? You would confer a great favor on me in so doing.”

“Mr. Vance, I must decline, at once, to enter upon the subject with you in any manner,” she replied, decisively. “I must refer you to Miss Mordaunt, who holds the letters, for all information.”

“And, yet, madam, you would aid me most materially in the elucidation of this affair, by doing as I ask, that is, if you wish that light should be shed upon the matter. You are aware, I suppose, that Miss Mordaunt is still very ill; too ill to be able to assist in it,” replied Edwin, still quietly, but pointedly.

“I repeat, sir, that I decline to enter upon the subject at all. I have nothing whatever to do with it, especially with you, sir,” answered Emily, with an angry light shining in her eyes.

“Pray permit me to differ from you there, madam,” said Edwin, in response, warmly, as he became incensed at her coolness. “You will find that you have a good deal further to do in the matter, and with myself, also. From information in my possession, I am no longer left in doubt as to the author of one of the documents in question, You—yourself—wrote it, madam; you—yourself—have contrived the wicked schemes

which has brought upon us this unhappiness. You, Mrs. Mordaunt, wrote one of those letters, at the least."

"And did I write the other, also, sir?" replied Emily, with a laugh. "Pray from whom did you derive your precious information?"

"From your sister, Ada, who saw you write the letter, saw that it concerned me, and saw you append a signature certainly not your own."

"What is that about Ada Dearborn?" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, coming forward to them, "What did she tell you, Mr. Vance?" she continued, with interest in her voice.

"I had hoped that you had not overheard what has passed between us, Mrs. Mordaunt," said Edwin, in response, "for your daughter-in-law's sake. I had intended this matter to be limited to herself. She, however, declines to give me the information I sought, although, from her connection with the matter, it is but her duty to give it. However——"

"Yes, yes! I understand. But what was it Ada Dearborn said? I heard her name used concerning events which are of interest to me, as well as to you, and as what Ada says can be depended upon, I am anxious to hear," interposed Mrs. Mordaunt, placing herself beside them.

"Well, Mrs. Mordaunt," interrupted Emily, who wished to create a diversion from a topic which she could not but feel to be dangerous, "allowing that my sister, Ada's statements are to be depended upon, in general, can we feel sure that Mr. Vance's rendering of them will be equally trustworthy. I should imagine that you have already had some experience of him that should carry its lessons," and as Emily said these words, she rose from her chair to move towards her husband.

"Pray be seated a moment, Emily," returned Mrs. Mordaunt, "it cannot harm either of us to hear what Mr. Vance can have to say, so long as we are clean-handed, while it will be very easy

to verify the account, by reference to Ada, herself. I beg of you, therefore, Mr. Vance, to repeat what she said to you."

"Then I must decline to have a repetition of the insults to which I have been subjected by Mr. Vance," said Emily, moving away from them towards her husband; but, stopping, she turned to Mrs. Mordaunt again, and quietly said, "I am ready, at any time, my dear madam, for my husband's sake, if not for my own, to enter into any explanations that you may require of me; but, after the wholly unmerited expressions which Mr. Vance has thrown upon me, with the very palpable object of cleansing himself by blackening another, I cannot undertake to do so in his presence."

"Heaven knows! Madam, that I do not wish to injure you, although you have so deeply, so unnecessarily injured me," exclaimed Edwin, earnestly. "I sought but to give you an opportunity, in the easiest manner possible to yourself, to right one of the wrongs you have done me. A few words from you would have righted me, and then the matter would have ended—forgiven and wiped away—so far as I am concerned. This you will not do; but I can assure you, madam, that, in justice to myself, in justice to others, I shall clear up this matter, regardless of all consequences, even if those consequences be very serious to yourself."

He looked at Emily, standing in her easy grace, her splendid face towards him, her fine eyes, in their beautiful softness, fixed upon his own, and, as he spoke, he could hardly believe himself that he addressed words of such import to a creature so very fair, so softly, so beautifully feminine, and sweet.

It staggered him almost to ascribe evil to her in her bright loveliness. But he looked at her, and said the words, nevertheless, though the power of her triumphant beauty seemed to bear down their force, and he felt that they fell flat, mis-applied and nerveless before her.

"That is sufficient, sir!" she replied, with a bow to him,

gracefully sarcastic. "I am here for a better purpose than to bandy words with you, despite the *very serious consequences* you threaten. I must decline to become your scape-goat."

"What is all this? Do you dare to address my wife, sir?" exclaimed Reggie, coming forward, as he heard her raised voice. "You villain! what brings you to this house, when——"

But his father's restraining hand was laid upon his shoulder, as he rushed furiously towards Edwin.

"Yes, father!" he continued, turning to him, "I say it is a shame that you receive this perjured wretch here, in this house, while my wife—my pure, beautiful wife—your daughter, too—is turned from the door!"

"Reginald—for my sake—if you love me—not another word!" exclaimed Emily, placing her hand on his arm, as she ran up to him, and looking into his excited face with pleading, beseeching eyes. "It is not for us to complain, Reggie. Come, let us go away, together! We did not come to quarrel. Let it not be said that we brought strife into this house of mourning, my dear Reggie."

At the touch of her hand the sound of her voice, Reggie's whole manner changed. The workings and wrinklins of rage disappeared from his face, and, as he gazed on his wife in her beautiful pleading and loving beseechingness—so admirably acted, yet so natural—a light of tender admiration and love sparkled in his eyes, and brightened his visage.

"Yes, Emily, my darling, you are right. Father, I am sorry! Forgive me!" he said.

"Well, I will say this, Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, that you have got your young bear licked into very tolerable shape. Keep on as you have commenced, and there will be hopes for you," said Mr. Mordaunt, looking at Emily, surprised enough, but with not a little admiration.

"He is my husband, sir, and we love each other!" returned

Emily, quietly, but with a spirited flash over her face, that told well, also.

"For shame, Henry!" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, reproachfully.

"Don't speak to her so cruelly, and of Reggie, too!" she continued, and as they said their good-byes, the clasp of the hand that Emily received from the generous-hearted Mrs. Mordaunt was a warm one.

Emily felt, with a little thrill of pride, that she had done well, the parting was very different to the reception, and she had gained, in spite of untoward circumstances, as much as she had hoped.

"If only I could have seen my poor little darling, Ally," said Reggie, with the tears in his eyes, as after coming down from his two minutes' visit to Ethel, who knew nothing, as yet, of his marriage, he shook hands with his father, and was clasped in the fond arms of his mother, at the door.

"Yes Reginald, it is very sad for you. Take it's lesson to yourself. You have commenced the world at a very early age, under circumstances——

"Well! I will say no more of that. Remember, what I have said to you to-day, and let us hear from you. How far do you go to-night?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, to him, as he stepped into the wagon beside his wife.

"To Ten Lakes, from there, as we may decide," he replied, and they were gone.

Emily departed from Lake Mordaunt triumphant as to the result of their interview, knowing she had left a good impression behind her, but vowing vengeance against her sister for her treachery. "But, for which," she said to herself, as they drove on, "I would have brought them wholly to my feet. They shall suffer for it though," with which amiable intention, she dismissed the subject for the present from her mind, for the laudable purpose of catechizing her loving spouse as to his

conversation with his father, and the tangible results that had flowed therefrom.

"I should not wonder if that woman does not make Reggie a good wife, after all, and reform herself in reforming him. She is very graceful and very undeniably handsome, too," remarked Mr. Mordaunt to his wife, as they walked back to the room where they had left Edwin Vance standing.

"Well, I hope so," she replied, "I was agreeably surprised at her conduct in some respects—— But I must hear what it was that Ada said."

The interview seemed to have been an unsatisfactory one to Edwin Vance, alone. He was not one whit farther advanced for his visit to Lake Mordaunt. He had not got the letters, and the prospect of obtaining them seemed more dubious than ever. While he had been very effectually snubbed and defied by the handsome Emily Mordaunt, he had made no progress either, and everything seemed to have worked against him. It was all very bitter to him, as he stood alone in the room, awaiting the return of the master and mistress of the house. He was there under the same roof with his Ethel, and he could not see her.

If he could but see her—even for a brief minute or two?

How he longed, with ardent, yearning longing, for a glimpse of the face he loved so well, even though the dark barrier that divided them, were not yet swept away by the strong hand of the truth. If he could but see her, if he could but be with her, how would he not sweep away, the falsehood which had brought them their misery. How he would make his loyalty and truth as clear as the blue skies above him.

And could he not see her? Why should he not see her? Why should more long days of misery and doubt, long reaches of blank unhappiness and drear uncertainty stretch out before them, when a few words might make all bright again for them both? He would try to see her, and as Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt

re-entered the room, he commenced his earnest appeal to them.

"It will do her good. She is weak and ailing yet, and it will be good to rouse her from the morbid and extreme grief under which she is prostrated for her little sister, who is now in Heaven, and in happiness," said Mr. Mordaunt, in answer to the strong objection of his wife, who, though deeply impressed by the force of Ada's statements as to her sister's animus and very suspicious doings with regard to Ethel's engagement and its breaking off, would not consent on the score of her daughter's still feeble state to allow her to be disturbed.

"And it may make her feel happier," added Edwin. "I know—as well as I know I love her—that she loves me, and will be glad to give me the opportunity to prove myself still worthy of her regard. I will control myself, Mrs. Mordaunt. I will engage not to excite her by violence in word or act. There shall be no noisy protestations on my part. If you desire it, I will but ask her to give me what information she can remember as to the contents of these letters, and shew——"

"Get her up out of bed, Florence," interrupted her father, "take her lover up to see her, and you will do her more good than a dozen doctors. Rouse her up to life again, and she'll mend the faster."

"Oh! Henry, don't speak so of our poor girl," returned Mrs. Mordaunt, with almost a smile upon her sorrowful face. "Well, I shall go up to her, and prepare her, though much against my own inclination. Neither is this the proper time for the interview, which is, in my view, utterly useless, unless Mr. Vance is prepared to make all things clear once more," and with this parting shot, the price of her given-up opinion, Mrs. Mordaunt left the room to prepare her daughter for the coming interview.

In a few minutes she returned, and Edwin Vance, hardly able to believe himself for the delight that thrilled his heart, yet very conscious of himself, from the nervous anxiety that

accompanied it, was escorted by her into the presence of the beautiful young lady whom he loved.

Ethel sat reclining in an easy chair—weak, changed, thin, and pale ; her paleness the more apparent in contrast against the deep black dress which she wore. Thin, pale, and changed as she was, she was still very beautiful—sorrowfully, sadly beautiful, but with an added charm from the sorrow and the sadness. Yet her eyes were bright, and a faint tinge of lovely pale rose lay on each cheek ; beauties which the expectancy of meeting her lover—even though he were lost and against whom she thought bitterly—had brought to her. But she was calm and quiet, and a little air of resolution was visible upon her face, as if her mind was made up, as if she entered her protest against the events that so peculiarly occurred to her.

He entered the room with eager step, yet hesitated, almost halted, as he stepped forwards to where she sat. He was imaginative, romantically inclined, of acutely nervous sensibilities, and his impressions on entering the room where Ethel Mordaunt sat awaiting him, were somewhat overwhelming. For, from the events of the next few minutes, how might not his whole future life be moulded. He met again her who was to have been his wife—met her after a separation during which a barrier of misery had been raised between them. He met her he loved—not with the old, happy confidence and joy—all in all to each other ; but in coldness, reserve and distrust on one side, with deep anxiety on the other.

Yet he was very happy to see her again, even though the meeting was painfully anxious to him, for he really loved her, with a real affection that no rebuff, however unmerited, could weaken or drive away in resentment ; nor can it be said that Ethel, on her part, was not glad to meet again him whom she still loved, although he had, as she was led to believe, wrought her such deep injury.

Edwin Vance was a lawyer, accustomed to cool command of himself and his thoughts; accustomed, and equal to expressing them, with care and fluency, in public—before any amount of public; endowed, or should have been endowed—as all lawyers are—with illimitable cheek, with expansive mental perspectives of boundless, resistless, conspicuous, assertive, sanguineate-hued brass; yet he entered the room to meet a quiet-looking and lady-like girl, with much timidity, with the nervous confusion of mind and body of his adolescent appearances before the fair, when his hands and feet were so difficult to get hidden away.

And yet on the face of it, it does not appear a very tremendous thing to appear in an interview with a young lady, no matter how pretty soever she may be.

Many people, indeed, like it, especially if the qualifying adjective, as applied to her looks, be in the superlative.

But when the happy interviewer, is much enraptured of the interviewed, is in sad disgrace with her, and highly anxious to restore himself to her good graces, it is but probable that he would find the opening moments of the interview rather bewildering.

"Miss Mordaunt—Ethel—I am very happy to see you so much recovered, very happy to see you again! I have been very anxious and miserable!" exclaimed Edwin, disconnectedly, as he advanced to her, and mechanically offered his hand.

Then his eyes took in the full change that had come to his own gay and brilliant affianced. Beautiful still, but how thin, pale, sorrowful and quiet. The same Ethel still—his Ethel—but the Ethel to whom brightness and sunshine had been so natural, now seeming natural in deep, dreary shades. He loved her truly, and, as the past and the present, with her, rose before his eyes in sudden picture, he had, by an effort, to repress the conflict of emotion that rushed over him.

"It is very delightful to me to see you again, and I cannot

thank you enough for allowing me the privilege, while, too, you are still so unwell. I had thought, though, that you were stronger than you are, Ethel. I never expected to see you so chan—— I trust my pertinacity has not caused you exertion, for which you are not able?"

"It was so strongly represented to me, as an act of justice towards you, that I should see you, even at this unhappy time, in order that you might obtain information upon a certain subject, which my father and mother could not give you, that I consented for that purpose, and I must request you, Mr. Vance, to confine yourself solely to that object. I am ready to answer you any questions you may wish to ask me," replied Ethel, coldly, as she touched very slightly his extended hand.

"If I had but known you had to force yourself to a painful exertion, Ethel, merely to perform an act of justice to me, I would have waited, patiently awaited, rather than that you should suffer. And, I will try to be as brief as I can, for your sake."

"I wish to do that which is right, sir. I cannot claim the exertion to be painful," answered Ethel quietly, "but the interview itself is not pleasant."

"Oh! Ethel, can you believe these things against me, these base and wicked charges that malice has brought between us and our happiness, can you trust me so little that I must disprove them to render my unstained honor clear to you? It is for that purpose I am here now, and——"

"I have trusted you, Mr. Vance, trusted you in all completeness, but I must believe the evidence of my own senses, and I most certainly trust you no longer. I prefer, too, that you address me as 'Miss Mordaunt,'" interrupted Ethel, the latter words in the quiet accents of her pride, but the added lustre of her fine eyes, and the heightened color of her face, showed her interest in what he said, who so earnestly stood before her, claim-

ed that he should be believed by her, in the strong rights of his love.

"Miss Mordaunt!—since you will not allow me to use the dearer name which it has been, and still is, my right and privilege to use—Miss Mordaunt, you are my affianced wife—you still remain so—for I have not by any act of my own forfeited my right to name you as such. I have to demand of you an explanation of the letter which a few days since I received from you breaking off, without cause assigned, our solemn engagement." He paused a moment, drawing himself instinctively up, as his injured manhood asserted itself. But then, as his eye rested down again upon the wasted figure of her who had so suffered for him, for his sake, his voice changed. "Oh! Ethel! Ethel, not for that, not for that, but in your kindness, in your justice tell me of these things of which I am as yet ignorant, that I may be enabled to show you that I am not unworthy of the precious love that was once mine."

She loved him, she always had loved him, and she loved him the more that he imperiously claimed her, and demanded as his right that which he asked. She loved him the more again that, recognizing all that she had suffered for him, and coming down from his high stand, he had put on that softening, smoothing, moving tone of supplication, of his loving generosity, that she should do that which it was bound to her to do. But though she loved him, though she could not help loving him, was it not but too patent to her that he was not true, and did not deserve her love.

Was it not but too plain, too evident that he was unworthy. She forced her mind—by the violent efforts of her pride, which would make it seem due to herself, her injured self, respect and maidenhood—up to the declaration, that he was unworthy, even though she knew at the moment that she had to *force* her mind to keep herself up to the desired mark. She knew that she did

not believe him to be so unworthy as the circumstances of the case required him to be. He had gained a point.

"I am not your affianced wife, Mr. Vance," she replied. "Not now," she added with a voice in which there was a quiver. "I did not break off our engagement without cause—there was but too much cause, Edwin. I could not have believed it of you."

"What cause? Let me know the cause? Tell me the cause that I may wipe it away at a word. Do I stand here like a guilty man?" he continued, with the firm conviction of his innocence ringing in every tone. "What are these letters of which I have heard so much yet cannot see, which I have never seen, but which I would so much like to see."

"I cannot find them," she said. "I cannot remember where I put them, but I have them somewhere. She has not got them; I had them after she went away. They are somewhere about. But I have been ill," and Ethel half rose from her chair in her excitement.

"Oh! tell me what they were. All about them, Ethel, that will do just as well. Your word to me, my darling, is the same as the letters. I can trust you though you do not trust me," answered Edwin, with sad reproach in his tone.

"You have not had occasion to mistrust me, Mr. Vance. I have given you no occasion," she answered.

"Nor have I given you occasion for mistrust either, Ethel, as in the end will become clear to you," he replied quickly, yet gently. "But will you kindly tell me what you can remember of the two letters, the writers, to whom they were addressed and their contents in so far as I am personally concerned, and how they came into the hands of the person who produced them before you—Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, I believe."

"Who, Mr. Vance? Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt! What do you mean? Mamma!" exclaimed Ethel, turning her surprised and alarmed eyes to her mother, who had been sitting near her during the conversation. "What does this mean about Mrs.

Reginald Mordaunt? It cannot be—it would be too dreadful—that Reggie has married that girl,” she continued.

“Mr. Vance, I was right when I objected to this interview taking place,” said Mrs. Mordaunt. “By an unfortunate mistake, against which you, however, should have guarded yourself, you have necessitated an explanation not yet desirable. Yes, Ethel, in a moment of folly Reggie has allowed himself to be persuaded into a marriage with Emily Dearborn. They were married privately in Rochester five days ago. Your father and I would not tell you, thinking you had sorrows sufficient already, my poor girl.”

“Married! Reggie married! and to her—to Emily Dearborn. Oh! I cannot believe it,” said poor Ethel, wringing her hands as she sank back into her chair, from which, in her excitement, she had half risen. “Oh! Reggie, Reggie, my poor brother. However were you induced by her?—that hateful girl of all others—my poor boy, my poor boy. But Reggie was here to-day, mamma.”

“Yes, and his wife also,” returned Mrs. Mordaunt. “The marriage may not be so utterly bad, my darling, as you think. Emily is improved, and behaved very well to-day under trying circumstances. They certainly seem very fond of each other. You must not excite yourself, Ethel, about this. Look at it calmly. At all events it is irremediable.

“Mr. Vance,” she continued, “this interview must come to a close for my daughter’s sake. Sufficient mischief has already been caused. You had better defer until another and more suitable time anything——”

“No! No! mamma, I am not unduly excited. You shall have no cause to complain of me, but I was a good deal shocked and distressed for poor Reggie’s sake. Let the—the—the business be completed which brought Mr. Vance here. It is not necessary that it should be tedious, and besides I begin to think that this hasty marriage throws a little light upon the subject. If it

be that Mr. Vance, as he asserts, is in reality guiltless, and Ada's statements, as related, are verified, it appears to me pretty evident what were Emily's reasons for marrying Reggie—so unlikely a proceeding for her.

"She has become alarmed at the possible consequences of her act, and has hastened to secure herself against harsh measures by this alliance. I remember now that she tried very hard to get the letters back from me that day, and was much discomposed when I declined to surrender them.

"But then, again, Mr. Vance, one of these letters was in your own handwriting, written, too, from this very house."

"That is possible, Miss Mordant," he replied. "I wrote many letters when here. To whom was it addressed?"

"To Miss Agnes Seaforth. Do you know a young lady of that name?"

"Agnes Seaforth; certainly I know her. She is the daughter of my father's greatest friend, and an unlimited favorite of my mother."

"And engaged to yourself, I believe, Mr. Vance, for some time past?" queried Ethel, looking him suddenly in the face, with eyes brightened with anger, a bright flush upon her face.

"Engaged to me! Agnes Seaforth! Most certainly not. Neither of us have ever thought of such a thing in our lives. And so poor Agnes Seaforth has been dragged into this matter. Well!" he added with a laugh—though a vexed laugh, "It might have been worse, for explanations fortunately are very easy."

"I do not think so, Mr. Vance. Your letter to her was very unmistakable in its terms," replied Ethel, still with the light in her eyes and the angry flush upon her face.

"Then it was not my letter. I wrote to her simply as a friend might upon a matter of business, relative to her unwillingness to accept an annuity of six hundred dollars a year left her by my father. By-the-by, Agnes Seaforth never received the

letter, and reproached me for unfriendliness at a time when she was in some mental distress. Miss Dearborn, by some means, has purloined the letter, and probably composed the other to suit its terms.

"From whom does the latter purport to come, Miss Mordaunt?"

"From Miss Seaforth's aunt, a Miss Springer, of Toronto," replied Ethel.

"Are you sure, quite sure, the name is Springer?" he queried.

"Yes! I remember the fact distinctly, Mr. Vance."

"The name of Miss Seaforth's aunt is Springer, and this fact is a strong proof of the unguineness of the precious document. Would you kindly tell me of its contents, in so far as they relate to me," said Edwin, with eager emphasis.

"The letter was addressed to Emily Dearborn, stating that you were engaged to her niece, and had behaved very falsely to her, that you ought to marry her, but had refused to do so. That she had heard of your engagement to me, and besought Miss Dearborn, as the only person she knew here, to take upon herself the task of warning me on this subject, and, in corroboration of the statements, enclosing a letter found accidentally by her, from you to her niece, written from Lake Mordaunt."

"Miss Seaforth never received the letter I wrote her. The whole plot is perfectly apparent to me now, though I cannot understand the motive of the young lady in making such misery between us. It is as I have stated however. Miss Dearborn had purloined my letter, and built up the forgery to suit its terms.

"Is it not equally apparent to you also, Ethel? and am not I exonerated?" queried Edwin, gazing with fond beseechingness upon her face.

"Hardly, Mr. Vance. You make out a plausible case against my new sister-in-law, but you have not proved it or your own innocence. And now as I have given you all the information

in my power I must say 'good evening' to you. I feel fatigued. If you succeed in making your innocence wholly manifest, I shall have to admit that a great injury and injustice has been done you. But your own letter is too strongly against you, and there is no doubt of its genuineness."

"My innocence shall be made manifest to you, if I spend my life in the attempt—if I have to drag the base contriver of the plot into court—to the jail to effect——"

"No, Mr. Vance, you must not do that. If Emily Mordaunt—my brother's wife—is the guilty person, she must be spared. You would but strike at us, who have suffered as well as you have," interrupted Ethel hastily, and with a deprecatory gesture.

"Am I then to suffer the ruin of my whole life's happiness, Ethel, that this cruel woman be held scatheless? Is my name to be forever left blighted in your eyes? Am I to drift lonely and unhappily through life for this? I hold no malice, no revengeful desire to injure this woman. If I can attain my end without her injury I will leave her to herself and to God's justice, but if I cannot clear myself before you, and regain what is now lost to me, am I forever to bear in silence?"

"No, Edwin, you shall not. I will—— Oh! were I but sure!" and Ethel half sprang up to her feet, and in another moment would have been in his arms, his troubles over, but Mrs. Mordaunt, interposing, placed Ethel back in her chair, and said:

"No, Mr. Vance. You shall be aided in your search by all means in our power, but you must spare my son's wife. And now you have done very well for one evening. You must not expect too much at once. I am not sorry now that the interview has taken place, nor do I think that Ethel is either. 'Good evening,' Mr. Vance." She held her hand out to him in such evident dismissal that he had to take the strong hint.

"Good bye, Ethel, my darling, you need not doubt my love,

at any rate. Very soon, I hope, you will not be able to doubt my truth to you either," and the strong pressure of his hand upon hers was a not unpleasing assurance that his love was hers in any event.

He found a horse and carriage at the door awaiting him, and Mr. Mordaunt came out of the library to see him off.

"Why, Vance! what's come over you? You look like a different man. Have you good news?"

"Yes, sir! I've discovered all, and have light before me. The only difficulty is that Emily Dearborn is your son's wife."

"Yes, confound her! it was her doing then. I always thought it. But you will have to spare her now. You'll manage well enough, and can let her alone. I am on your side now."

"Yes, and I think Ethel has a tendency that way too. If I could but get the whole artful scheme cleared up at once."

"Well, I'm glad that Ethel's eyes are opening, poor girl! for it will make her happier. She has had trouble enough of late."

"Indeed, yes! You have all had sorrow. I can only apologize for intruding my own miseries upon you all this time."

"Good, I think, has come of your visit, Vance. Good bye to you."

Edwin jumped into the wagon, and they had just started, when Mr. Mordaunt called after him,—

"I say, Vance! I'll tell you what you had better do. Write to Horton, my brother-in-law, or, what is better, go to him and get him to take up this affair. He can do what he likes with Ethel, and he'll only be too delighted to enter into the thing. Something for him to do."

"Thank you, Mr. Mordaunt, I shall do so. It's a capital idea," he called back.

When Edwin Vance arrived at the hotel in Ten Lakes he found a telegram awaiting him.

It was from Sidney Wolverton, and ran as follows :

“TORONTO, ———

“Come on at once. Very important business affecting your interests. Do not delay.

“SIDNEY WOLVERTON.”

He had intended to see Ada Dearborn in the morning, but this message, which he did not altogether understand, changed his intention, and in an hour he was on his way to Toronto.

CHAPTER X.

A STOUT, WELL-GROWN LAD.

“A gentleman to see me in the library—sports his bit of pasteboard too. Well, he’s an early caller,” said Mr. Vance to the party assembled round his mother’s breakfast table on the morning of his return to Toronto, as he took up the card from the salver handed him by the servant who had brought up the name.

“‘Mr. Erastns Gooch,’ What can he want, I wonder. Silly man, if he wants law so early in the morning. You remember Mr. Gooch, Agnes, one of the heroes of your dreadful adventure?” he added to Miss Seaforth, who, with her aunt, had been Mrs. Vance’s visitors for a day or two.

“I am acquainted with Mr. Gooch, demurely replied the young lady, drooping down slightly her eyes as she spoke.

“Acquainted with him, Agnes. Why you were not acquainted with him a week since,” answered Edwin.

And then with a laugh he continued—

“Looks rather romantic, does it not? Lovely heroine in danger and distress ; big hero to the rescue.

“Big hero heart stricken at charms of lovely heroine. Lovely heroine grateful. ‘No cards.’ A novel condensed. Mother, I know this gentleman. Can you not ask him up to take some breakfast with us?”

"Certainly, Edwin, if you will not tease Agnes with such nonsense. You can bring him up if you like, or ring the bell."

So the bell was rang, and a servant despatched to show Mr. Gooch into the breakfast room.

Had not Agnes, with that little shewing of consciousness too, acknowledged her acquaintance with him, it was hardly probable that Edwin would have asked his mother to invite Mr Gooch into their privacy, for he had not appeared in altogether favorable light during his remarkable interview with Mr. Hatchitfess.

But Edwin had come to the conclusion that there had either been exceptional circumstances with Mr. Gooch on that occasion or very rapid improvement, and invited he was to join them in the breakfast room, and in another moment he was among them.

But if that gentleman, on entering, betrayed not a little astonishment on finding himself very unexpectedly at a ladies' breakfast table, Edwin Vance, who rose to receive him, was equally astonished as he looked up at his visitor.

Could this be the same man who, with hat stuck upon one side of his head and in general rakishness, had held little Hatchitfess up in the air and talked alcoholic nonsense to him?

It was hardly possible, and yet there was no mistaking that six feet of stalwart humanity, who had sent up his card as Mr. Erastus Gooch.

The Erastus Gooch who stood before them now was a very different Erastus Gooch from "Govitry," the capturer of the fleeing Hatchitfess.

He was very carefully and handsomely dressed; in good good taste too, with a quietness which showed he was not deficient of knowledge of the world, and, notwithstanding his huge stature, a very good-looking young gentleman, also with the merry blue eyes glittering above them away near the ceiling

and the good natured and very pleasant face that at the moment bore so ludicrous an air of bewilderment.

All his wildness had disappeared ; the reckless, rollicking medical studentism had departed, and he appeared, as he was, a quiet, respectable young gentleman.

"How do you do, Mr. Gooch?" said Edwin Vance. "I am happy to meet you again. My mother has invited you to join us at breakfast."

"Mother," he continued, "permit me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Gooch."

"I am happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Gooch. Pray join us at breakfast. Have you resided long in Toronto?" said Mrs. Vance, as she acknowledged his bow.

"Yes, madam, or rather I am a medical student attending the university here. I trust that I have not disturbed you at your breakfast. I expected to meet Mr. Vance only," replied Mr. Gooch.

"I have already breakfasted, thank you, madam," he continued, and he turned to bow to the other ladies.

"No valid reason that, for a man of your size, Mr. Gooch. One breakfast more cannot injure your health. It cannot be accepted as a sufficient excuse, Mr. Gooch. Miss Springer—Miss Seaforth ; ladies to whom I have great pleasure in making you known," added Edwin, mischievously, for he was well aware that they were already acquainted with each other.

"We already know Mr. Gooch," replied Agnes, but Mr. Gooch was not to be deprived of the pleasure of shaking hands with her for all that.

"Yes," he said. "I am happy to say I have that honour, not for a very long time back though, I am sorry to say."

"Oh, yes, we know Mr. Gooch very well!" exclaimed old Miss Springer, a happy, old maiden lady, almost helpless from age and infirmity, yet who lightened up the dreariness of her years with the sweet temper and pleasantness of her youth.

"Very well, indeed," she continued, "I think Mr. Gooch has fallen in love with me. He has come to see me two or three times this last week, but he appears to be afraid of me, though, for I notice that he knows that Agnes is at home to protect him, I suppose. Is this not correct, Mr. Gooch?" and the old lady laughed heartily.

"Certainly, madam; going for the licence to-day," he replied.

"I fear, though, that you would rather see another name than mine gracing it, Mr. Gooch; but how did you know that I was here this morning?"

"I did not know it, Miss Springer," said Mr. Gooch, as they sat down to breakfast. "I only came to see Mr. Vance."

"Oh, come now, too thin! What do you want to see me for? For what does a medical student need a lawyer? Confess the truth and acknowledge fairly that you came to see Miss Springer or Agnes there," answered Edwin, laughing.

"But I am no longer a medical student. I've thrown aside the lancet, anatomy, physiology and rubbish. No more carving up Her Majesty's subjects for me, and I do require a lawyer," replied Mr. Gooch, ignoring Edwin's insinuations.

"Better to require something else, Mr. Gooch. Lawyers are dangerous articles of desire," returned Mr. Vance. "But what wickedness have you been about this time?"

"None in particular. But something has been done to me, though," Mr. Gooch replied, with a sly look towards Agnes, as though he would much prefer that any little past escapade be not made public. An old lady——

"Ladies—always ladies, Mr. Gooch. Mr. Gooch I am astonished," interrupted Vance, delightedly.

"Old ladies too!" said Miss Springer. "Upon my word, Mr. Gooch, you are a deceitful creature. Do you wish to marry her after all you have said to me?"

"Oh! that is too bad altogether, Miss Springer. How can

you imagine such things of me? I could not marry her if I wished it, for the poor old lady is dead. Don't tease me, and let me tell my story.

"This old lady, my mother's cousin, or her forty-second aunt or some other outrageous degree of consanguinity, for we are of Scotch descent, you know, took it into her head to die a few days ago, and very sensibly left all her property to me. For which act I am very much obliged to her, as there is a good lot of it. I am very sorry too, and all that sort of thing; yet as I have never seen her more than half a dozen times in my life, and then she resolutely declined to take the very slightest notice of me, I cannot cry very much. I certainly never expected to get her money though, and what do you think was her very exquisite reason for leaving it to me? Expressed it in her will too. Why, because 'I am a stout well-grown lad of my years; not like the rest of the Gooches, poor, feckless, miserable, undersized bodies, with nothing to them,' as she said. And yet there is not a Gooch that I ever saw—male or female—under six feet in height. They are all raving about it too, not getting any of the money, and being called names into the bargain.

"Sensible old lady, though," he resumed. "Scotch too—wise people the Scotch: never leave their money out of the family. Nice habit, very, and so I have come to Mr. Vance to fix things up for me. 'Legal formalities,' and so forth."

"I shall fix things up for you, as you phrase it, with great pleasure, Mr. Gooch. Not a very difficult undertaking, I expect, and I congratulate you heartily upon your good fortune. Excellent reason that for leaving her money to a man because he is 'a well-grown youth,'" answered Edwin, with a laugh. "I hope the fortune is as large as its recipient. You will need a wife, though, Mr. Gooch, to look after you. There will be a wedding soon, I expect. We shall all look for invitations."

"I think you had better insert my name in the license of which you spoke erewhile, Mr. Gooch," exclaimed Miss Springer.

"I could not allow that fortune to slip away from me. Remember that, for all the young ladies will be on the *qui vive*."

"Yes! you will be all the rage now, Mr. Gooch. The lion of the town. Is your good fortune known yet?" said Edwin.

"Why, I only knew myself a few days ago," replied Mr. Gooch. "Perhaps you might have noticed that, on the evening of our little adventure with that wretch Hatchitfess and Miss Seaforth, there—there—there might have been the faintest suspicion, the barest possibility that I had been imbib—well, yes, smelling the cork; so to say, a little. Had you noticed it?"

"Well, Mr. Gooch, now that you remark it, I remember there was just the very faintest possible suspicion, deducible from your manner, of something of the kind," answered Edwin, laughing heartily at the vast difference between Mr. Gooch's cool description and the reality.

"Faint suspicion! Bare possibility! There was most apparent certainty. You ought to have been ashamed of yourself, Mr. Gooch," exclaimed Agnes, with suspicious energy. "You were dreadfully inebriated."

"Well done, Agnes! I see you take decided interest in his good behaviour. That is right; don't let him get even near to the 'cork' henceforth," said Mr. Vance, looking at poor Agnes quizzically.

But Mr. Gooch came to her rescue.

"I was really very much ashamed, Miss Seaforth, and more so that you had been present. But I have been very different since, and shall remain good for the future, I can assure you. And that was, too, the solitary occasion on which I have transgressed. I had received the good news that day only, and probably I felt very glad, or very sorry, or something unusual, I suppose, and that was the way of it."

"Oh! that was the way of it, was it? Well, perhaps that makes the matter more excusable. One does not get a fortune

every day," said Edwin, in justification of Mr. Gooch in Agnes' presence.

"No, not every day; but were I to get a dozen fortunes again I would not repeat my indiscretion.

"By the by!" he continued. "As I came along the street this morning I heard that young Hatchitfess was found drowned near the steamboat wharf this morning. and ugly rumors of foul play are coupled with his death."

"Drowned? That young man drowned. How horrible!" exclaimed Mr. Vance. "What a terrible end to a vicious career. But is it certain? May there not be some mistake?"

"I think not; my informant was not in doubt evidently. Young Hatchitfess has been intoxicated more or less entirely for the past week; ever since the failure of his attempt to abduct Miss Seaforth. I met him last night in a terrible state; talking loudly, almost insanely, to a gentleman who seemed to be persuading him to go home. And to-day he is dead. He must have fallen over the wharf in his intoxication, though what had taken him into that vicinity I cannot imagine. It does not lie on his way home."

"How very horrible!" exclaimed Agnes, who looked as if she meant what she said. "Poor erring young man! From my heart I pity him. Such an awful week leading up to such an awful death."

"Yes! it is horrible enough. But you have no need to pity his death, Agnes, for it is better for himself that he is dead, as well as for society, to whom he was an injury and a disgrace," returned Edwin, gravely.

"The event is an unmixed blessing to you, my dear Agnes, for his malice against you, I happen to know, was unbounded. He was an evil speaker," said quiet Mrs. Vance, rather unforgettingly, for Hatchitfess' malicious assailings had come to her ears.

"His end was dreadful," she continued. "Yet in what better way could such a life be expected to terminate."

"Well, Mr. Gooch," said Edwin, after a pause, "as you appear to have finished your breakfast, we will go to the library and proceed to business, I am pressed for time to-day. I suppose you require my valuable services this morning."

"I have an appointment at eleven o'clock," he added, as they rose from the table.

"Are you coming to see me soon, Mr. Gooch?" laughed Miss Springer, when that gentleman was bidding her adieu.

"Yes, Miss Springer; most certainly; if you will allow me," answered Mr. Gooch, with awkward laugh and conscious look towards Agnes; amid which, he followed Mr. Vance from the room.

Their business was soon arranged to mutual satisfaction, and Mr. Gooch prepared to take his departure from the house.

He had taken his leave; had moved towards the door, and hesitatingly lingered there, as if he had something upon his mind, for which he could not bring himself up to the point of declaration, yet evidently was anxious to disclose.

He turned back to the table where Vance had remained standing; stopped half-way; thought a minute; moved on again another step; stopped; brushed up his hat; appeared to be remarkably uneasy, and at length, by a mighty effort found voice, and spoke:

"Mr. Vance, I have something to tell you; private and confidential, you know."

Mr. Gooch paused again, unable, apparently, to proceed.

"All right! fire away! Mr. Gooch. Always tell everything to your legal adviser. The best plan in the end. What scrape have you got yourself into now?" said Edwin, smiling at his client's evident perplexity.

"Oh! it is nothing about law. Worse than that," replied Mr. Gooch, who then went on rapidly. "I suppose you have

perceived—I know you have, by the way you have been poking fun at me this morning—that—that—that—”

“That you are head over ears in love with Miss Agnes Seaforth—you were going to say” interrupted Edwin, laughing.

“Yes ! I very plainly have perceived it, Mr. Gooch,” he continued “One would be remarkably unobservant not to have perceived the very palpable fact. It is too plainly evident. Very little doubt of that, Mr. Gooch. You are a gone case.” And Edwin, sticking his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, squarely regarded his uneasy visitor in smiling enjoyment.

“Well ! what are you going to do about it ?” he queried.

“That is just what I want to know, Mr. Vance. What I wished to ask you about,” responded Mr. Gooch, earnestly. “I have done little else but think of her ever since the evening I met her with you, and I suppose every one can plainly see what is the matter with me. But she seems so far beyond me, so beautiful, so unreachable to me, that I fear for myself—for an ending that would be dreadful to me. Do you think I have any chance with such a girl as Agnes Seaforth ? You know her so well.”

“Yes ! I have known her from infancy, and I know nothing but good of her ; a great deal that is very admirable. Miss Seaforth is a lady ; high-spirited, accomplished, and of very elevated and refined sentiment. If you win her you will indeed be a lucky man, and I do not see why you should not win her. It depends, in great measure, upon yourself,” replied Edwin encouragingly. “But how did you obtain your introduction to her ?”

“Oh ! I spent all the next day after our meeting in pestering a married aunt of mine, who lives in Toronto here, and who knows Miss Springer, to call upon them and take me with her,” said that man of resource, Mr. Gooch.

“Very ingenious ! Mr. Gooch. And I suppose you have now transferred the pestering to them. Very good,” responded

Edwin. "I do not think either that it will be found very displeasing to the young lady. Little as I have seen of the affair, I can see that. But Miss Seaforth is a rather particular girl—sensitive and high-spirited. You will have to be very careful,"

"Yes! I know that. I have found out that already," said Mr. Gooch, lugubriously. "I was so anxious, so awfully overcome that my feelings got to be too much for me, and the second time I visited her I absolutely was wound up to the point of declaring my affection, but that she very adroitly stopped me."

"What! the second time you saw her. Well, you are a bold man! Did you expect to win her in a week? It is very lucky for you that she did stop you," answered Edwin. "But see you here, Mr. Gooch," he continued. "I must go; I cannot be pestered with your love affairs. Miss Seaforth, probably, will take more interest in them. Go ahead and prosper; but not quite so fast as a declaration within a week though."

And Edwin laughed; they both laughed.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Gooch. Make friends with my mother, and get her to assist you. Agnes and she are great allies. I think, too, that the old aunt is upon your side."

"Well! I am very much obliged to you. I feel better already, Mr. Vance! Good morning!"

They parted then. Mr. Gooch going his own way, to spend the day, probably in contriving a plausible pretext to visit his fair lady in the evening, Mr. Vance, to his appointment with Sidney Wolverton, who, by his telegram to Ten Lakes, had caused his abrupt return.

CHAPTER XI.

DID HE DO IT?

Our hero, upon receiving the message from Wolverton, requiring his presence in Toronto, on important business concern-

ing his interests, had experienced not a little anxiety and alarm thereby.

So many accusations, by this time, had been made against the character of his friend, that with the suspicious occurrences in his own knowledge, Mr. Vance had come to seriously mistrust and doubt him, and gravely to suspect the disinterestedness of his friendship.

He had resolved, for the future, to keep clear of Mr. Sidney Wolverton, but this message had appeared to be imperative, and he determined to see for himself what meant this new move upon the board.

Miss Ada Dearboon, too, had implicated the man in the matter with which her sister had been connected in the malicious effort to ruin his engagement, so that he did not feel at all well-disposed to him who had been his friend. To think badly of him thus had been painful enough; but he could no longer shut his eyes to the fact that his friend's reputation was gravely attacked by very many people whose words bore weight.

He finally resolved that not again would he be entrapped by him, and there seemed every probability that Mr. Wolverton would not meet with a very warm reception.

At the appointed hour Sidney entered the office of his friend to find him there before him.

He entered rapidly and demonstratively, but there was a furtive and uneasy appearance in his manner which he would not conceal and which Vance did not at all like.

"How do you do? Mr. Wolverton," said Vance, coldly enough, shaking, in slight response, the demonstratively proffered hand extended him. "I am here as you see, as I wired you I should be. What is this urgent business whose importance requires my presence so hurriedly?"

"I am very glad you are here, Vance, for there is urgent necessity for your presence. Urgent and unpleasant, I fear, to

both of us," replied Wolverton, seriously. "Have you heard that Albert Hatchitfess was found dead—drowned this morning?" he added uneasily.

"Yes; I had heard it. But what has his death to do with this matter; this unpleasant business of which you speak? Its details I wish to hear at once. I am pressed for time, having to leave town to-morrow."

"His death will be found to have, I fear, but too much to do with the affair; to complicate it very unpleasantly, Vance. The news was a very disagreeable shock to me this morning, I can assure you," said Wolverton, visibly uneasy and, apparently, unwilling to press on with his statement.

"Pray! go on with your story at once. Let me hear the whole of it," responded Edwin impatiently. "I cannot as yet see what Albert Hatchitfess has to do with my affairs."

"You shall hear. I do not, however, find the subject very pleasant upon which to enter," said Sidney.

"I was compelled to come to this city three days since," he resumed, "to attend to various matters of business, and as the note for thirty-five hundred you so kindly endorsed for me last July falls due in a few days I came prepared to meet it. My other affairs completed, I repaired to the bank to take it up, but—"

"Oh, well, Wolverton, if the whole matter is that note it does not amount to anything serious. If you cannot meet it I can do so; in fact, I expected to do so," replied Vance nonchalantly, apparently relieved.

"Unfortunately that is not the difficulty. I was prepared to meet it myself. Perhaps, however, you had better let me tell the story in my own way," said Wolverton in reply.

"I have to go back a little, Vance," he resumed directly.

"When a few days after you had endorsed the note for me, I arrived here to settle the pressing claim, to aid me to meet which I had asked it, I found difficulty in discounting the note.

My own name as maker was the objection, and I was told that another endorser would be required. I could not do without the money, and so I had to go to the Hatchitfesses to obtain their aid.

"Young Hatchitfess who was alone in charge," he continued, "positively refused at the first to have aught to do with the matter; but, very suddenly, he changed his mind; offered to endorse and obtain discount of the note himself if I would give him one hundred dollars as commission. The bargain was a hard one, but I had no other resource left me than to accept. He took the note, went out to discount it, returned in an hour with the proceeds, and I paid him a hundred dollars.

"Well, as I said before," he again resumed, "I went to the bank the day before yesterday to pay the note. To my astonishment and horror I found on its presentation that instead of thirty-five hundred the note was for thirty five thousand dollars. It had been altered."

"What! Do you mean to tell me, Sidney Wolverton, that the note you obtained from me is for thirty-five thousand dollars?" exclaimed Edwin Vance, springing to his feet in horror, his face turning pale with excitement. "Is this true? you villain. Altered! A likely story indeed. Altered! forsooth! This, then, explains my dim recollection of the spoilt note of that evening.

"Great Heavens!" he continued, "I remember now. I was forewarned of this by Ethel herself. Fool that I was. I laughed at her for her warning and trusted you instead, treacherous villain.

"It was for this, then, that I was drugged; that you might the more easily effect your robbery? And now, worse than villain, you would slander the dead. Conceal your crime by slandering the memory of this poor young man who has gone to his account. Wolverton, you are in danger; there are reports of foul play, and--"

But Sidney Wolverton, having got into the thick of the affray, warmed up to his work, had lost his uneasiness, his furtive watchfulness and embarrassment. He had recovered his self-possession and confidence.

With eyes flaming in indignation ; with outraged virtue mounting to his cheeks ; insulted dignity swelling his statue, he sprang to his feet, and appeared at first as if he would have rushed upon and annihilated his traducer. Vance had stopped his speech at the violent action, while Sidney, by a great apparent effort, checked himself, and calmly, quietly, yet forcibly, said :

"Mr. Vance, I expected anger on your part. I expected reproach, even violence ; but I was not prepared for insult such as this. Permit me to say, too, that I shall not allow it. You charge me with robbery ; with slandering the dead to cover the crime you allege, and you hint at something worse again than these.

"Very good indeed !" he continued. "Yet allow me to think that these little accusations are rather uncalled for on your part. From any other than yourself, to whom I am under great obligations, I would not have endured such words. You will find yourself in another moment compelled to retract them." And Sidney Wolverton, coolly taking out his pocket-book, produced from it a paper and continued.

"Fortunately—very fortunately for myself, it would appear—I am sufficiently a man of business always to take and keep receipts for my payments of whatsoever nature. When I telegraphed you at Ten Lakes, at the same time I telegraphed my bookkeeper at Hopetown for this document, the positive and undeniable proof of my innocence and Hatchitfess' guilt. Be so good as to read it," and Wolverton extended the paper in his hand to Edwin Vance, who, still pale and excited, had remained standing against the table.

He received it and read as follows :

"TORONTO, July 27th, 1873.

"Received of Sidney Wolverton, the sum of one hundred dollars, in full of our commission account, for procuring the discount of his note, endorsed by Edwin Vance, dated July 24th, 1873, at three months, for thirty-five hundred dollars.

"JOHN HATCHITFESS & SON,

"Per Albert Hatchitfess."

"Do I appear as the robber—slanderer—murderer—now, may I ask, Mr. Vance?" exclaimed Sidney, with a triumphant ring in his tone, and a perceptible accent of sarcasm. "Am I the treacherous villain now?"

There it was in his hand; palpable evidence to the generous mind of Edwin Vance; all generous when it judged his friend.

"Forgive me, Sidney," he said, advancing towards his friend, his hand extended shyly, as if he feared rejection. "You said I should have to retract my uncalled for remarks, and I do retract them. Can you forgive me? You are right, and I am wrong; but why did you not show me this paper at first?"

"Why, I forgot it, I suppose," as shaking the offered hand, replied Mr. Wolverton. "Could I have imagined that you would suspect me? Say no more about it though; I might have found your words more unpleasing had I been, in reality, guilty."

He said these things with a laugh, but he had not, however, given his true reason for the non-production of the paper at an earlier period of his explanation. Had he not desired a violent and theatrical denouement, that he might bring Vance to his feet, and had he not accomplished his purpose?

"I cannot so easily forgive myself, as you have so generously done, Sidney," said Edwin, with self-reproaching visage, looking at his friend.

"Oh, say no more. It is all right now, and I shall not vex myself about it much," Sidney replied, lightly.

"But seriously, Vance," he continued, "this note business is grave for both of us, while young Hatchitfess' death compli-

cates it confoundedly. The father will have to pay, but I fear there will be a lawsuit to force him."

"We must see him at once, Sidney. Let us go to his office."

But they did not find Mr. Hatchitfess there, as they might naturally have expected, on the day of his son's dreadful death, had they not been too excited to think of the matter, and they had moved to leave the office when the old gentleman walked in, passing through to his private room without noticing or seeing, apparently, a person present.

Vance sent in a message to him, and they were shortly admitted.

The case was stated as delicately as possible by Mr. Vance, the receipt exhibited, and Mr. Hatchitfess was requested to provide for the difference between what the note originally was and its present figure.

But this he positively declined to do.

"I shall not pay until I am forced to pay ; until this thing is sifted to the very bottom. I do not believe that my poor boy, headstrong and imprudent though he was, has done this thing. There is fraud, gentlemen," he said.

"Do you charge us with fraud, Mr. Hatchitfess? indignantly enquired Edwin Vance.

"There is fraud, gentlemen," coldly replied Mr. Hatchitfess.

"I shall not pay one cent until the law compels me."

Vance and Wolverton immediately left the office in high dudgeon at the implied insult, after informing Mr. Hatchitfess that the law should at once be set to work to enforce payment.

They then proceeded to the bank for an examination of the note in question.

They derived but little satisfaction from the visit. The note was shown them and critically scrutinized. It bore, apparently, a fresh and genuine look, at first sight, but close examination revealed traces about the word 'thousands,' in the body of the note, that seemed suspicious, while the figured numbers in the

heading were cramped up. But these would have passed without remark had not scrutiny been directed to them.

"Nevertheless, Mr. Vance," said the president, when the Hatchitfess receipt was shown him, with an explanation of the state of the affair. "Nevertheless, the note was discounted by us as you see it. The names are undoubtedly genuine, and you will have to pay. You have your recourse against Hatchitfess. You must remember, too, that I wrote you concerning this very affair, and you replied that all was correct. We hold your reply. This note will have to be met."

"The note shall be met, sir, at maturity," replied Mr. Vance, quietly.

He then called for a statement of his account with the bank, and found that the Hatchitfesses had paid into his credit the several large amounts they had received for him, at the conclusion of the lawsuit before mentioned, and all others as well, and this being found satisfactory, he, with Wolverton, left the bank.

"I will find it a very heavy pull to pay this amount, Sidney, and shall have to take steps to recoup myself at once. Fortunately I have the money on hand, but were it not for a judgment which has placed a very considerable amount in my hands, I should have found myself in a pretty fix."

"All that I have got, Vance, is the three thousand five hundred dollars which I brought with me to pay this note, and I do not see how I can raise more just at the present. But you shall not be left in the lurch like this. If you have to meet this note I will secure you against possible loss by mortgage, or in any way that you may prefer. All the Hopetown property is fortunately clear of incumbrance now, and, I am happy to say, in a prosperous condition. But we must take steps against Hatchitfess at once," continued Sidney.

"Yes! without delay," answered Edwin. "I shall, for my own interests, do so, and I am now on my way to a notary to appoint another agent to act for me."

"As to that of which you speak, Sidney," he continued, "I think you ought to secure me by some means against loss, as I derived no benefit from the transaction, which was merely to accommodate you ; but, if a mortgage will cripple you in any way or injure your credit, I shall be satisfied with other security. Think over a proposal for to-morrow, and let me know. You do not wish to leave town to-day, do you?"

"No ! not until this thing is arranged, or you are placed beyond the reach of loss. I shall meet you to-morrow at noon, and meantime will prepare the plan of an arrangement. But had we not better secure legal advice towards taking steps immediately against Hatchitfess? If possible an attachment should issue against the son's estate. He is full partner in the firm, and they are wealthy. If you choose, I will immediately undertake this."

"Very well, Sidney ; do so, for I am busy enough as it is. I have to secure my other property, for a part of which Hatchitfess is agent," replied Edwin.

"All right, then, Vance. Don't distress yourself over this matter, for you shall not lose a cent."

"By the-bye !" continued Sidney, "when does your marriage take place ; you have not told me ?"

"Not for a time, at all events," said Edwin, seriously. "In fact, Sidney, I have had grave trouble lately, and have not yet come to its end. Through the wicked machinations and falsehoods of a young lady, with whom you are acquainted, Miss Mordaunt has been induced to break off our engagement."

"What ! To break off the engagement ! I can hardly believe it !" exclaimed Wolverton, stopping in his walk, as if in surprise. "Well, I am astonished ; astonished and very sorry for you, too. But, Vance, will it not come all right again?"

"Perhaps it may. I hope it may," was Edwin's answer.

"It will ; be sure. But who is the young lady to whom you

refer as the author of the difficulty?" queried Sidney, as if he did not very well suspect.

"Miss Emily Dearborn is the lady to whom I refer," replied Edwin, bitterly.

"Emily Dearborn? Surely you mistake! That I cannot believe. Have you proof, that you so asperse the character of an estimable young lady? Let me tell you that I hold so high an opinion of her that it is my intention to ask her to be my wife."

"Then you need not, Sidney," replied Vance. "You are too late. She is no longer Emily Dearborn. But a very few days since she eloped with and married Reginald Mordaunt, brother of my affianced wife."

"Eloped! Married!—to Reggie Mordaunt, too. That boy! Impossible!" exclaimed Sidney, turning pale and visibly shocked, for he halted his steps in the street and put his hand involuntarily upon his companion's arm.

"You will find it true enough, Sidney," replied Vance. "I regret your disappointment, but rejoice at your escape."

"Married to Reggie Mordaunt! The very last thing I should have expected from her. Whatever did she marry him for?" Wolverton said, though thinking aloud.

"Doubtless she had good reason for it, or she is not Emily Dearborn," answered his companion, with a bitter laugh. "She is not worthy your thoughts, Sidney. Not worth another moment's distress."

"You are right, Edwin, she is not worth a thought. I am over it already. I shall not distress myself over the faithless, mercenary jade, fair though she be," said Sidney, with answering laugh. "I shall stick to business instead. Better for me. But this is your notary's office, I suppose. Good-bye for to-day. I shall go on to my lawyers."

"Good-bye, then, until to-morrow, Sidney," said Edwin,

shaking his hand. "Your affections are not very deeply engaged, are they? All the better for you."

And Edwin entered the office.

Sidney Wolverton continued upon his way up the street towards Osgoode Hall in a curious state of mind. The news of Emily's marriage had affected him deeply. If it were possible for one of his nature to love strongly, he had loved Emily Dearborn, and had hoped to marry her in spite of his knowledge of her character.

"As good as done, at all events," he had thought.

But the chief sensation of his mind was anger at the trick which she had practiced upon him.

"Beware! Emily!" he muttered, with darkening face. "You have trifled with me, and I am not to be trifled with. Dearly shall you pay for this!"

"But what in the world did she marry that boy for? That is what I cannot understand. Old Mordaunt is neither dead nor dying.

"Well! there is one comfort, I am out of this note business splendidly. But what a price I paid for it."

Shuddering, he glanced with involuntary apprehension around him.

He stepped into an hotel, whose sign caught his eye, and fortified himself with a strong dose of brandy.

"That's the cure for nervousness," he said, as he came out and walked on again.

"Vance is all right. He shall have no mortgage from me. I've a better plan in view."

CHAPTER XII.

AGNES WRITES.

Mr. Edwin Vance, on reaching his home after his busy and exciting day's work, had pretty well reconciled himself to the

inevitable payment of more than thirty thousand dollars to meet the note which he believed that young Hatchitfess had altered.

He felt the payment of it to be a serious, though by no means a ruinous, drain upon his resources, and it had been a subject of anxious consideration to him during the day.

Yet as his signature was undoubtedly upon the note, he philosophically made up his mind that he had to pay it.

He had, during the day, consulted some of his legal confreres and they had confirmed his own opinion that Hatchitfess would have to make good the amount, while at the same time they had advised him to take some tangible security from Wolverton—a mortgage, if possible.

But his peculiar disposition of mind, which rendered him so unsuspicious of others, made him feel so adverse to pressing his friend ; who, in his eyes, having proved himself guiltless of that of which, after much unwillingness he had allowed himself to suspect him, must be, of necessity, guiltless, altogether and wholly guileless. A friend who had proved himself trustworthy, and whom he could wholly trust.

His other business of the day had been satisfactory to him.

He had finally settled up and transferred to another the agency which the Hatchitfesses had had in their hands, and the old gentleman had promptly paid over to him a large amount by his cheque.

He had cashed that cheque immediately—an unusual proceeding for *him*, it might appear ; but then had not Hatchitfess insulted and offended him ?

Had Edwin Vance been so careful and suspicious with others it had been better for him.

But the bent of his nature, be it for good or be it for bad, ruled him, as it rules all of us ; yet the cashing of the cheque, so immediately, was an unusual thing for him to have done.

Dinner over, he accompanied the ladies into the drawing-

room, and having thrown off the cares of business, proceeded to amuse himself, in doubtful manner, with the cares and troubles that beset his love affairs; to think of Ethel Mordaunt and their separation.

He related to his mother and Agnes Seaforth the sorrowful events of his late visit to Lake Mordaunt, amid their warm sympathy for his disappointments and their deep indignation against the author of all the mischief.

Not a little of their indignation, however, was vented, especially by his mother, upon Miss Mordaunt herself, for daring to doubt *her* son's unimpeachable truth, and for being so deceived by a trick so very palpable.

To this, however, he would not listen, and was indignant in return that they should dare to doubt his peerless Ethel.

But when, in his narration, he came to describe, in deeply injured tone, that the basis of the plot was his pretended prior engagement to Agnes Seaforth, that young lady laughed loud and long at his distress.

"How dreadful that must have been! Poor fellow! You are really a much injured individual," and her clear young voice rang through the room in her—a *little sarcastic*—laughter.

"I don't see what you have to laugh at, Agnes," he replied, disgustedly. "You would not like it yourself, you know. You will be engaged, too, before very long, I expect, if your big Erastus is the man I take him to be, and then you will know how it is."

And Agnes laughed but the more.

"I have this much to say, Agnes," said Mrs. Vance, "that had it been yourself to whom my son had been lucky enough to have become engaged, there would not have been like trouble for him. You are too sensible a girl, my dear, too high spirited and too right-minded to have thought so little of your lover and of your own powers of attraction, or have doubted so very easily."

"Unfortunately Agnes and I have always been too good friends to become anything else. Why did not she fall in love with me then?" replied Edwin, lightly.

But he continued in a more serious voice—

"Perhaps, my dear mother, Miss Mordaunt has had previous cause to consider that I am not wholly perfect, which I am not by any means, and you must remember that the *prima facie* of the case brought against me was very strong."

"Well, it may be so, but were I a man, and my affianced had treated me in like manner, I should take her at her word. 'As good fish in the sea as ever was caught,' " said Mrs. Vance, decidedly, and it was very evident that her feelings towards Ethel had undergone a change.

"But not for me, mother," he replied. "I do not blame Ethel, nor do I think she is to blame. I shall do my best to regain her. If I can do so, well and good. If I cannot, I must try to spend my life in as much content as I can attain."

"If she is worth the regaining, you will regain her. I admire you for your loyalty to her, but I do not think with you that she is free from blame," said Agnes Seaforth, and with her remark the conversation dropped.

Before he retired, Edwin obtained, not without much difficulty, a promise from his mother that she would write to Miss Mordaunt to give her the real history of Agnes' relations with them, the impossibility of her aunt having been the author of the letter ascribed to her, the whole facts of the case, and a hint of Agnes' own love affair. Also that she would endeavor to get Agnes to write also; but it was only after long effort and a hint that the forged letter compromised her favorite's name, could Edwin induce his mother either to write herself or ask Agnes to do so.

The letters were written.

Mrs. Vance's production was very much to the point, very cutting and rather unpleasant in its tone, the letter of a mother

whose son had been injured, but it was admirably calculated to effect its two-fold purpose of clearing her son's name and of rendering its recipient uncomfortably conscious that her action was imputed to anything rather than the heroic cause.

The production which Mrs. Vance succeeded in eliciting from Agnes ran as follows :

“TORONTO, Wednesday, —

“DEAR MISS MORDAUNT,—

“Mrs. Vance, with whom I am at present on a visit, has requested me to write to you with reference to certain matters in which her son and yourself are concerned.

“I do so very unwillingly, for I do not see that there is any occasion that you should have caused the necessity for it.

“I beg to deny most explicitly that I am engaged to Mr. Vance, that I have ever been engaged to him or likely to be. Certainly it does not appear to be the wish of either that such an event should happen.

“I would, however, beg to remark that, had I been engaged to him, I should hardly have doubted his truth so easily, that, on the authority of a couple of letters laid before me by one whose motives and whose general moral character were so open to suspicion as those of the lady who dared to use my name in her forgeries—it should have seemed necessary, without verification, to cancel my engagement.

“Yet this you have deemed proper to do.

“Either your love for the man to whom you affianced yourself was so weak that you were not justified in promising to become his wife, or you very much undervalue yourself.

“I have to inform you, also, that I wrote to Mr. Vance during the period of his visit to Lake Mordaunt in July last, upon a mere matter of business, which at the time seriously perplexed and annoyed me. I never received an answer, although Mr. Vance has assured me that he wrote the same day that he received my letter, and I know him well enough to *believe* his statement, although I am merely a friend.

“His reply to me, I understand, is now in your possession.

“I must also beg to deny, on my aunt's part, that she ever wrote to Miss Dearborn in her life ; that she ever had occasion to do so, or, that if she wished it, she is capable, through infir-

mity, of holding a pen. Besides, her name is Springer—not Springle.

“All this you can, if to do so suits you, verify easily upon enquiry here in Toronto. You may, perhaps, also be surprised to learn that the word of Mr. Edwin Vance is considered worthy of credence in this city. At all events, it is credited.

“I was very sorry to hear of your long and dangerous illness, from which, I trust, you have wholly recovered.

“I have also to offer my warm sympathies to you for the great loss you have sustained in the death of your little sister. I earnestly desire, for Mr. Vance’s sake as for your own, that you may soon—both of you—be happy again in your love for each other.

“I am, dear Miss Mordaunt,

“Yours very truly,

“AGNES SEAFORTH.”

Rather in the nature of a lecture this letter; but then Miss Seaforth had meant it to be such, and had not yet forgiven Ethel that she had doubted the man whom she herself had proved to be a friend so good; whom she had so much cause to respect and admire.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIDNEY GETS HIS WILL.

The next morning when Mr. Edwin Vance had finished his breakfast and was making for the library, a hurriedly loud ring upon the front door bell told of a hurried visitor.

He opened the door himself, and was surprised to find his friend Sidney Wolverton, evidently too in a high state of excitement, standing upon the door-steps.

“What is the matter now, Sidney? I thought you would have torn the bell down with your outrageous ringing. What is the news this morning?”

“News,” gasped out Sidney. “There’s news that neither of us will find agreeable. Hatchitfess has——”

"Paid the money, I suppose," interrupted Edwin. "But come into the library, Sidney, and there relate the cause of your haste," and he led the way into that apartment.

"Paid the money, indeed!" exclaimed Sidney. "No! nor will he ever pay it. He has skedaddled—cleared out—cut and run for it, with every cent he could scrape up of his own or other's money. He's in the States now, safe and sound, confound him!"

"Hatchitfess gone? No! no! Sidney. I can hardly believe that little story. I should as soon suspect to hear of my worthy mother robbing a bank and levanting with the proceeds. No! no! for what should Hatchitfess run away? He is worth a couple of hundred thousand dollars."

"Yes! very likely he is worth it to-day, if he was not yesterday, for he has taken a considerable lot of other people's money with him. He is gone, I tell you, Vance, and has not left a dollar behind him either, as you and I will find to our cost. Just come down town and judge for yourself," answered Sidney, excitedly.

"Hatchitfess a defaulter! I can hardly believe it. Why he had the best name in the city, excepting that he was a regular Shylock. It looks cerulean for my thirty thousand dollars. We will go and hear the news, Sidney."

But on reaching the offices Edwin Vance found that it was all too true.

Hatchitfess had gone, and was far enough away by this time. Gone too with everything he could lay his hands upon, and leaving next to nothing behind him. His house, its furniture, his son's horses and equipages, with a few other trifling assets, were all that remained to satisfy a host of defrauded creditors.

He had left a letter to his head clerk, telling him of his purpose. That an attempt was being made to rob him of a large sum, which he would never pay, and, as his beloved son was

dead, nothing left for him in life, he would go, with his hard earnings, where they should be safe.

He had enclosed, the clerk said, money sufficient to pay up his employees and to bury his son.

"He must have a lot of money with him too," added the clerk, "for though the young man spent an awful amount, yet Hatchitfess must have been very rich, and he has taken another vast amount of his clients' money. It is a very bad job, that's what it is."

"No use for us to remain here, Sidney," said Vance when he had heard all that was to be heard. "I shall have to pay the note, that is very plain. You will have to go half."

"Yes, Vance. I ought to meet it all, by right," replied Sidney. "But I have not the money. However, I have a plan to propose that will save you from loss. Let us go up to your office and talk it over."

They walked out from the scene of anger and dismay that filled up the place of business of him whose motto had been. "We may be very hard, but we are very honest."

"Had I been able to have got out an attachment yesterday we might have saved ourselves, Vance," continued Sidney, as they walked up the street. "But though I pressed matters vigorously, I could not get it done yesterday, and Hatchitfess must have got wind of it. My firm impression is that he has cleared out merely to save himself from this payment. He could not make up his mind to pay out this thirty-five thousand dollars, and he has preferred to sacrifice a business which produces the amount every year."

"The affair is inexplicable to me. I cannot understand it. That his son's death affected him greatly, I can readily believe, but why he should commit a crime that will compel him to hide in obscurity for the rest of his life, and that too in enforced idleness, when the press of business, the scraping together of dollars

and cents, formed his chief happiness, I cannot understand," replied Edwin Vance.

"It is as I say," said Sidney. "He was willing to sacrifice everything rather than crack his heart-strings by paying a sum which is in reality but a trifle to him.

"But Vance," he continued, when they had seated themselves in his friend's office, "we have got to pay this note; we cannot clear out. Or rather, you will have to pay it, for I cannot, and I must repay you in some manner. You shall have a mortgage if you require it, as the Hopetown property is all clear of encumbrance. But if I do mortgage it my credit will become seriously strained, which I cannot afford to have strained. The property is all clear—not a cent upon it—while the total indebtedness of whole concern would be covered by one-half the stock of raw and finished goods. But the difficulty is that it is too large for my capital. As I say, if I put a mortgage upon the property my credit will suffer, and I fear that I will again get down into the mire, out of which with great effort I have raised myself.

"Now, if you will go in with me into the concern it will make everything as firm as a rock. I will give you one-half interest in mills, lands, stocks, everything, if you will pay this note and join me in partnership, and I will undertake to make more money for my half share than I now do with the whole, for the weakness of my credit cripples the whole concern."

"I would prefer not to do that, if anything else can be accomplished, Sidney; but give me all the figures on paper from your memory as well as you can, and we will talk it over."

They did talk it over, and before nightfall Edwin Vance had become a partner in the "Hopetown Manufacturing Company," as they agreed to call the new concern, on the basis originally proposed by Sidney.

Without examination, without reflection, but purely out of his amiable trust in human nature and in his friend, he had thus

put himself almost wholly in Wolverton's power. Had done the thing he had promised not to do, with his eyes opened to the light which they would not see.

Had done this thing which was, to say the least of it, a very unwise thing.

But it was done. He had signed the deeds; he had paid the note; his partnership was registered, and he could not retract even had he wished to do so.

It is not, however, to be supposed that the Hopetown property was in the same rather shaky condition that the previous July had seen.

The establishment was naturally a good one. It had been much improved by Sidney, and the thirty thousand dollars he had received from the proceeds of the note which he had so treacherously obtained from Vance, had put the whole concern into good order—free from debt—and with partially restored credit.

The only things that militated against its success were the incurably bad reputation of its owner, and his wasteful extravagance.

He thoroughly understood the business; was energetic and economical in its administration; but the wild and reckless life he led; his gambling and dissipation consumed large sums of money, while his frequent absences in the pursuit of these pleasures, were not conducive to prosperity.

However, Edwin Vance's name would be a tower of strength to the concern, and if he would but make up his mind to spend his whole time at Hopetown, merely to watch his partner and keep him within bounds all would go well, while there was fortune, riches, profits without limit, before them.

But would he do this?

Was not his time sufficiently engrossed by other duties; his profession, his property, and above all the troubles of his disappointed love. As things stood on the day that Edwin Vance

signed his name to the deed of partnership it very much appeared that Sidney Wolverton would be left to act as he pleased as managing partner of the "Hopetown Manufacturing Co."

* * * * *

Mr. Sidney Wolverton left town the same afternoon, very well pleased to get away. His visit had been an eminently successful one; he had accomplished all he had hoped to accomplish, and more than he had hoped.

Yet he was very glad to get away from Toronto. A strong sense of relief overspread his whole being as the train got fairly under way and sped into the open country, all bright under the soft autumnal sun. Freedom, deliverance, safety seemed to open out to him. New thoughts, new hopes, new life, centred within his brain as the heavy eastern express rushed through a tract of forest lands, all gorgeous in its frost-reddened tints—the glorious ending of the Canadian summer—and left its dividing belt between him and his fear.

He had not been stopped. And as this assuery settled itself in intense relief upon his brain, he threw away the past. Cast it away—a thing that was spent and ended. He looked now but to the prospering present; forward to a prosperous future.

"Well! Vance is a good fellow," he said, when his thoughts had become fixed once more upon the things before him. "Who else would have done as he has done? Who else would have trusted his friend as he has done me? But am I his friend—really his friend—a friend to him as he has ever been to me?"

"Sidney Wolverton, can you answer that question as it should be answered?"

"No! You cannot, Sidney Wolverton. A friend. Heaven help me, what kind of a friend am I for any one?" and the man's whole frame shuddered as recollection flew back to what he had so lately thrown behind him.

"Were this day but over, that awful thing safe out of sight

and forgotten, then could I start afresh. All is bright before me, except myself. But I will change. Why may I not come to the same as he came? I will change! I will change! I will do the fair thing too to Vance, who has — Yes! what has he not done for me? I will make these works pay him back the thousands of which I have robbed him.

“No more brandy—no more cards for you, Sidney Wolverton. To business, and shew your friend, your friend whom you do not deserve, that you can be a friend too. If I can make Hopetown mills pay, they shall pay, and for your sake too, Edwin Vance.”

In kindred reflections Sidney Wolverton's mind occupied itself as the fast speeding train had flown over a hundred miles of its journey; yet despite of them and his new made vows, when the train arrived at Hopetown, Mr. Sidney Wolverton stepped off from it in a somewhat intoxicated condition.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CONTRAST UNPLEASING TO HIS PRIDE.

Having contrived to reach the end of the somewhat unusual press of business, professional and otherwise, in which he had found himself involved since his return to Toronto, Mr. Edwin Vance, a few days after the departure of his friend, Sidney Wolverton, from that city, finding himself free to do as he chose, resolved to make an incursion upon the territories of our good neighbour, Uncle Sam, and a raid upon the domicile and the peace of mind of his friend Mr. Horton.

The press of business over, nothing left to occupy him with immediate action, his unquiet and uneasy mind at once reverted to Ethel Mordaunt and the troubles into which he was thrown with reference to her and their broken engagement.

He had made, to be sure, some little headway in the difficult

and tedious work of restoration ; had obtained a vantage ground from which to make his charge upon the enemy, plain to his sight, and, consequently, was all the more anxious to commence the fray, and end the intolerable suspense that oppressed him.

He could no longer brook the delay, the misery and the doubts that laid their heavy load upon him, and he was determined that he would, if he could by any means, end them, and bring back again the brightness to his life, which had been so long, as it seemed to him, and so bitterly extinguished.

Accordingly Edwin having bid his "farewell" to his mother for a day or two, shaken hands with Agnes Seaforth and her aunt, who were still her visitors, and unmercifully joked Mr. Gooch, whom a few minutes before he had sent up stairs, with an irreverent laugh as sole answer to the utterly absurd and meaningless question concerning his legal affairs which had formed that gentleman's excuse for calling upon him, proceeded to the station and placed himself comfortably into a Pullman car for his night's journey through to Rochester, New York, and his first stopping place.

Safely arrived the next morning in that beautiful and busy city—"busy," the next best praise to "beautiful,"—he spent a few hours in viewing the place, which he had not before visited, and in refreshing the inner man after his night's long travel around Lake Ontario.

As he was shown into the dining-hall of the very handsome hotel to which he had been directed, the head waiter who escorted him, after a deliberate survey of his personal appearance from head to foot, spoke as follows :

"Yeu air a Britisher, neow, I imagine, stranger ; from Canedy too, I would expect, ain't yeu ?"

"I am from Canada, certainly, my friend, but I am not altogether a Britisher, as you call it. I am a Canadian," answered Edwin, a little sharply, as if the address had struck upon his

ear painfully, but replying, nevertheless, as he remembered he was now in the land of equality.

"Sho! neow, du tell. A Canadian, air ye. Wall, I calculate, stranger, that a Canadian and a Britisher air much of a muchness. Tarred with the same stick, I guess. Yeu air an aristocrat now, ain't ye?"

"We have no aristocrats in Canada, my worthy friend. We are, unfortunately, extremely democratic in our ideas, and tarred too much with Uncle Sam's stick—the worst of the tar too. But I wish you would bring me my dinner. I am very hungry," said Edwin, laughing.

"Wall, yeu shall hev yewer denner, stranger, right off, though it's rather airly, ain't it neow, Britisher?" replied the waiter, and off he went, after placing Edwin at a table in the deserted dining-hall, the usual dinner hour not having arrived.

But as trains wait for no man, our hero had to take his dinner early or do without.

As he attacked the appetizing viands set before him, his loquacious attendant re-commenced his inquisitive discourse.

"I reckon, neow, stranger, that as you air from Canedy, yeu will know for certain all abeout the two young folks who kem hiar to this hotel, a two weeks since; ran away from theair friends, I calculate, and who got married in this hotel. Before the minister, too, I guess. That air so, stranger."

"How should I know every one who runs away from Canada to get married, do you suppose?" said Edwin, good-naturedly, for he was becoming amused at his questioner's persistence.

"Sho! I want to know. Yeu surprise me, stranger. Not know the young folks? But yeu must know 'em. They kem from Canedy, yewer piace," returned the waiter, argumentatively.

"Canada is rather too large a country for me to know it's whole population. I'm very much afraid that I have not the

honor of the acquaintance of these people who so greatly interest you."

"Ya'as! I've heerd heow Canedy was considerable of a little place. Wall, I tell you, stranger, they kem from there, and you must know them. I want yeu neow tew tew tell me if their folks war'nt riled awful neow when they heerd as how they got married deown here in the States?"

"Well! I have no doubt that they were vexed, but as I don't know them, I cannot tell you for certain. Who were these people, and what were their names?" asked Edwin, with a laugh.

"Wall!" slowly answered the other, "I calculate as heow I don't exactly know the gal's name, any heow, stranger, and a right smart gal she was too fur a Britisher. It was that gal wheo got up that skedaddle, I reckon. Ya'as, stranger, fur the young fellar looked to be kinder soft and washy-like beside her, raither as if his eye teeth had'nt got cut through yet, mister. His name was Mordaunt, I calculate," and the waiter solemnly changed the plate as he finished the story he had ineffectually put to twenty people before.

"Mordaunt! Mordaunt; did you say?" exclaimed Edwin, with a start of surprise. "Yes, my friend, you are right. I do know them, and so they were married here?"

His curiosity aroused, he occupied the remainder of his meal in obtaining a full history of the affair from his attendant, so far as the latter himself knew it.

Edwin Vance started, by the noon train, again on his way to the large manufacturing town in which Mr. Horton resided, and a very pleasing journey he found it, as the train passed through the beautiful, well cultivated and thickly populated section of country which lay between him and his destination.

The numerous and handsome towns and villages, which lay thickly on his route; handsomely ornamented and planted with the lovely shade trees, which add so much to beauty and

utility ; the numerous factories, shops and evidences of industrial greatness that everywhere met his view ; the handsome farm houses, all neatly painted and ornamented, with their well ordered gardens and trim enclosures, so different from the ugly and slovenly generality of the Canadian farm buildings, while they pleased his eye and awakened his admiration and interest, could not but excite the painful reflection that the cause of all this prosperity, these tokens of wealth, enriching industry, that threw his native land, despite its equal, if not superior advantages, far into the shade—the sole cause of all these—“uncompromising protection to native industry,” had not been brought to bear the same beneficent effect upon that native land of his—Canada—which seems so persistently to reject the enricher.

“Why have we not our thousands of happy and prosperous workmen where now we have but hundreds? Why have we not, as they have here, tall factory chimnies piercing the sky in sight of each other? Towns at every mile—wealth at every door?” he thought, and the thought was humiliating to his national pride.

“And what a hopeless prospect of attaining this great enricher—*protection to ourselves*—is before us. The present is bad enough, but a week, a day, may see, as events would seem to indicate, the advent to power, in our mis-led country, of a party whose leaders are practically committed to ‘free trade’ principles, which, well enough for England, who manufactures for all the world, are *ruin, stagnation, and the paralysis* of all industry—save the mere production of the field and the forest—of a new country like our Canada.

“What sensible rulers we put over us—what a sensible people we are to permit our young and splendid country to remain an untrammelled pasture ground—a regular common for all the world to graze in. Very bare they leave it too, and in return they very wisely shut us out, with remarkable closeness, from

their grass. Our doors thrown open, a slaughter market for all the earth, our fatness goes to feed foreign nations, while our land is left ill-peopled, poor and unthrifty.

"How different does our shrewd Uncle Sam conduct his affairs. He keeps *his* fatness in his own land, as I can so plainly see, and how much better his land looks under the treatment too. *He* won't have any work done for him in foreign countries that he can do at home. No workmen for him scattered all over the earth, if he can help it, consuming one-half the value of his raw products to carry them there. The condition of working for Uncle Sam, I see, is that the workmen live with him, thus aiding to build up his strength and his power.

"I am ashamed of my countrymen."

Occupied by his reflections and the survey of the country from which they sprang, the hundred miles he had to traverse was speedily accomplished, and sooner than he expected he arrived at his destination, and left the train.

An enquiry of the polite depot-master directed his way, and in a few minutes he was at the door of Mr. Horton's residence, a large, handsome and imposing building, in the midst of trim gardens and sightly groves that bespoke the wealth and taste of the owner, and had knocked for admittance. Upon giving his name to the servant who opened the door—who looked at him a moment as if to judge his quality—he was, without a word, ushered into the drawing-room, and into the presence of the master of the house.

Laying down the paper that he was reading as our hero entered the room, Mr. Horton looked up to see who might be his unannounced and unexpected visitor.

"What! Edwin Vance, is it you?" he exclaimed, rising from his chair in evident pleasure. "Who would have expected you here. I'm real glad to see you, though," and he shook his guest's hand in hearty fashion.

"Well, I'm glad," he continued. "Here, take off your over-

coat; let me help you. You're going to stay here, you know. Have you brought your traps along?"

"No! I left my valise at the station, Mr. Horton. I could not find a cab—all taken up, I suppose—and didn't mind the walk through your beautiful little town. Yes! I've come to see you on a matter of importance to myself, Mr. Horton, so I will take you at your word and trespass upon your hospitality for the night," replied Edwin to his host's queries and warm greeting.

"Glad to have you. I am lonesome enough sometimes in this big house. If you had dared to go the hotel you need not to have come here about the business. I'll order up tea at once, and send a man for your baggage to the depot. When did you leave Toronto?" continued Mr. Horton.

"Last night. I came through by rail instead of crossing the lake, and a very pleasant journey I had to-day through this beautiful and prosperous country."

"Yes! it is a fine country, both by the gifts of nature and by the improving hand of man, Edwin. We try to make it a country that men will come to to live in, happy and prosperous. We are ahead of your Canada in that respect. Although Nature has not endowed us more liberally than she has you, yet we are ahead of you, simply because we not only know, and use our knowledge, how to keep our population in the country, by providing them with profitable work to do, but to attract the people from your country and all other countries, by providing them the same benefits. We Yankees allow as little as possible to be done for us by foreigners, we prefer to do our work ourselves in our own country, and we have become rich and powerful in consequence. You Canadians don't understand the art, and don't seem willing to learn it either, so we are ahead of you."

"Yes! I admit it; the contrast has been forced upon me to-day; a contrast sufficiently humiliating to my national pride,"

returned Edwin, "and it has made a protectionist, *pur et simple*, of me.

"I wish with my whole heart," he continued, "that every Canadian who has a voice in the ruling of his country would see, as I have seen, the difference which a national policy in this respect can effect. I fear, however, that but too many of them could not appreciate the course, so much do the shibboleths of 'Free Trade,' the sole unfortunate incident of our connection with Great Britain, pass current among us. They would not see."

"Quite likely they would not," replied Mr. Horton, "and yet Great Britain, until she had attained her pre-eminence as the manufacturing power of the world, was the most protective—the best protected nation in the world."

But as he said this, the stroke of a gong was heard, and Mr. Horton rose—

"That is the signal that our tea is served; you must be hungry; we will adjourn," and he led the way from the room.

During the meal—at which Mr. Horton's old housekeeper presided in solemn state—Edwin had not an opportunity to enter into the details of the affair which had brought him from home, and their conversation was limited to general subjects.

He saw that Mr. Horton was friendly—seeming as well disposed as ever—and he justly concluded that, being a near relative of his Ethel's family, he must have been informed of the unhappy events which had occurred to him and to them—that he did not blame him as the cause of the disageement between himself and his love, and he hoped the more strongly, therefore, for his aid and assistance towards the restoration of his own and, as he still felt assured, his Ethel's happiness.

When they were again alone—he had accompanied his host to the library for the enjoyment of a cigar—he found the ice broken for him unexpectedly, Mr. Horton remarking—

"Well! and so you people have been getting into mischief since I left you, it seems. Cannot you take care of yourselves without me to look after you, and what is all the nice scrape about between yourself and my niece? A pretty state of affairs—broken hearts, and so forth. I heard of it from Mordaunt some time since, and also of Ethel's illness."

"That is what I came to see you for, Mr. Horton—to get your advice and, if possible, your assistance, to put things right again. Miss Mordaunt has been very ill—very ill indeed, and is not yet convalescent. You have heard, I suppose, of their poor little Ally's death?" answered Edwin.

"Yes! I had heard from poor Florence; a bitter blow it must have been to them—the sweet little darling's loss."

"It was indeed! What with that sad event, Ethel's terrible illness and Reggie's heedless and ill-judged marriage, they were steeped in sorrow to ——"

"What! What did you say, Edwin? Reggie's marriage—Reggie's marriage—what is it you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Horton, amazedly, springing to his feet.

"Have you not heard it then, Mr. Horton, from Lake Mordaunt? I was wrong to mention the affair, perhaps, but I surely supposed you knew. It is too true, unfortunately; he married Emily Dearborn—married her here in Rochester too—eloped with her the day before little Ally died."

"Who? Emily Dearborn; he married Emily Dearborn—that girl of all others. Well! he has done it this time, I guess," said Mr. Horton, sinking into his chair again.

"Poor Reggie! Poor Reggie. Why it was that hateful girl who caused all the mischief between you and Ethel, don't you know it? Poor Reggie!" continued Mr. Horton.

"Of course I knew that she was the cause, but could not prove it, and Ethel's illness has prevented me from getting even a full history of the affair," replied Edwin.

"But whatever made Ethel such a fool as to believe that im-

probable story? Why, from what I hear, it is almost palpable on its face of falsehood."

"The two letters—one forged by her, the other stolen—had been ingeniously contrived for the purpose, and at first sight the story was very plausible. The worst of the matter is that these letters cannot be found, although thorough search has been made for them since Ethel's recovery."

"Yes! so I am told, and of course they could not be found by people who will not take the trouble to think. Of course they searched every place than where they were likely to be—where of necessity, under the circumstances, they must be. I'll engage to have those letters in my hand five minutes after I reach Lake Mordaunt. And now tell me all you know of the matter."

Edwin then proceeded to enter into a full detail of all the events that had passed during the last unfortunate month of his life; giving every particular which he could remember, and finally wound up with a piteous appeal that Mr. Horton should take up his case and aid him to regain his lost status, "for," he said, "her own father told me that you could do more with Ethel than any other person—himself and her mother not excepted—in fact, that you can do as you like with her."

"Yes! Ethel and I are very good friends. But now don't you consider yourself a remarkably cheeky young gentleman to come here and in the coolest manner possible endeavour to hunt me out on this wild goose chase, this precious undertaking to heal your broken hearts, and put you into good humour with each other once more. You have more brass about you than I gave you credit for possessing, Edwin Vance. Well! I can't blame you for it, seeing that you are utterly incompetent to mend matters yourselves. Ethel was a fool, in the first place, for believing the story, and putting herself into a brain fever over it, and you are another, too, for not being able to see what is plainly before your very eyes. A pretty lawyer you must be

if you cannot conduct a case better than you have this. You could not find the letters, eh? Not one of all you stupids at Lake Mordaunt? and my sister a Yankee too. I know where those letters are concealed at this moment, but then I can use my wits, I guess.

"Why, I'll engage," continued Mr. Horton, "to lay the evidence, taken from your own statements to-day, which points out to me with certainty the hiding place of these letters, before you, and you'll be none the wiser as to where they are than you are now."

"Do so, Mr. Horton. I should be very glad to know, and would much like to hear your convincing evidence," replied Edwin, unable to resist laughing at the very complimentary speech of his companion.

"But you shall not know, though," returned Mr. Horton. "If I agree to take this matter into hand, not a step shall you take, not a word shall you utter in reference to it until I give you leave. I am not afraid though to lay the convincing evidence you speak of before you, for you'll not see its force. Now listen. Ethel says she kept the letters and has them somewhere in her possession. A servant saw her accompany Miss Dearborn to the door when that worthy young lady left the house after presenting them—very warm weather during September last. Ethel was discovered senseless afterwards in the same room in which the interview had taken place, has been ill in bed ever since—the letters cannot be found—now where are they? tell me that, Mr. Vance? You are a lawyer, you know."

"That room and the whole house have been thoroughly searched, Mr. Horton," answered Edwin, after a moment's pause.

"Ah! I thought so. I expected as much. I guess as heow yeu air right smart folks up in Canady, anyhow, but yeu will hev tew git a live Yankee to pull the wool eout of yewer eyes for yeu," said Mr. Mordaunt, mockingly, in his native vernacular, and he continued:

"Well ! Edwin, I'll take up this affair for your sake and for Ethel's, and though I cannot guarantee success, otherwise than to prove you have been slandered. To-morrow you go back to Toronto to your business and remain there, for not a movement of yours shall I allow in the matter until I give you full permission. I can't trust you, you know, and your Ethel is a romantic little fool or she would not have made the trouble at all."

"I cannot blame Ethel, Mr. Horton. I cannot blame her even that she could doubt me as she did, for you may be very sure that the plot which Emily Dearborn would originate must have had plausibility about it to deceive any person, and again I must confess that I had given her a previous cause to doubt me. I broke a promise—a solemn promise—which I had made to her," said Edwin, at the last words, lowering his head.

And he related the whole story of his adventures at the cricket-ers dinner and the subsequent events of the evening. Without reserve or hesitancy he told it, made a clean breast of all, painful though it was to do so. But his auditor was a gentleman and a man of the world, who understood human nature, the actions and the motives which work upon men ; viewed them by the tempering light of long experience, which had worn away Phari-seeism, so he merely replied—

"Oh ! yes, I understand. You are a gentleman and too unsuspicious. Wolverton made you tipsy for his own purposes, I suppose. He, too, is concerned in this black business. In all probability it was he who stole your letter to Miss Seaforth at her instigation.

"I cannot think so," Edwin replied. "Sidney would not commit an act so base. He has proved himself to be, within the last few days, entirely above suspicion."

"But I say that he would commit any act, no matter how heinous it be, and I repeat that he was concerned with Reggie's precocious wife in the plot against Ethel and yourself," replied Mr. Horton, energetically.

"You don't believe me," he continued. "Will you believe what I say when I send you word that the letters are in my possession, eh? Well you *are* — But I'll say no more about it. There is one thing certain that you will have to lower your opinion of human nature or you will not be able to live in this world."

"My opinion of human nature! Why should I change it?" answered Edwin Vance. "What has human nature done to me that I should change it? I see no reason. I am aware that there are villains in the world—Emily Dearborn, for instance, but why should I undervalue my race that there are a few villains among its millions?"

"Now you go back to Toronto and get to work. Or go down to Hopetown to look after your precious partner and stay there," replied Mr. Horton, good-humouredly sarcastic of speech. "Probably you will there obtain a chance to see human nature in a light new to you. I don't say that all is bad in your Wolverton, but there is a great deal too much of it in him—more than there is good; and though you have been a friend to him that no man ever had better, yet take care that he does not ruin you. Go to your mills and look after him. At any rate—after your visit here—keep out of my way until I send for you.

"Look here, Vance," he continued. "At any day there may be a general election with you in Canada—this Pacific Railway matter will throw out your present government—why then do you not run for parliament? You will be of use there, more than you are at present; moping about, and do good to your country. I have your love-affairs in hand; throw aside all thoughts of them until I want you, and run for parliament, now that you will have a chance so good.

"What is all this Railway rumpus about, at all events," queried he again.

"Pretty hard to tell you what it's all about. The press will

give you the surface appearance of affairs, but the root, the hidden spring of all, lies in the deep, the widely extended debauchery of the political morality of Canada. The whole political sentiment of the country is low and debauched—always has been debauched, and so will remain until a radical change of the entire system is effected ; a change however, that cannot be effected until ignorance, the too comprehensive suffrage and paid parliaments are abolished. Education, a suffrage of education as well as of property and unpaid parliaments will accomplish the reform if aught can do so.

“ The half-dozen great statesmen who are our real rulers—” continued Edwin “ have engaged the country irrevocably, wish the building of this Pacific Railway ; a work of stupendous magnitude, but necessary for the binding together and the strengthening of the new confederation ; and there has been, as there always has been in such cases, a little bribery and corruption afoot. Such, it really seems sad to say, appears to have been the case with all great public undertakings—you own Pacific Railway for instance—but the underhand means which have been used to fledge our bantling have possessed the additional demerit of an early discovery, and there will be a great row made over it, as every individual Canadian is virtuously indignant that all his fellow countrymen are of political tone so debased that such things can happen. Of course there will be a great re-action, but the worst of the matter is that the exposure will in all probability defeat the very promising scheme for building the road, and delay it for years to come.”

“ Yes ! probably, and your government will have to take the work into its own hands ; an expensive method. You'll get no foreign capital with which to construct the road now. The present ‘ promising scheme,’ as you call it, will be knocked on the head by these revelations ;” answered Mr. Horton.

“ Yes ! that is certain. Yet the road will have to be completed in any event. The country has engaged itself and will

have to complete its engagement ; notwithstanding that the incoming party are bitterly opposed—for reasons incomprehensible to no one save themselves—to the work, and will make delay," returned Edwin.

" I judge from the tone of your sentiments that were you to enter parliament you will be opposed to the new Cabinet."

" Yes ! though more that I am a Protectionist than for any other principal reason. The leaders of the incoming party are committed to ' Free Trade'—a policy, in my estimation more damaging to the country than the non-erection of a dozen Pacific roads. If I enter parliament at all, it shall be as a Conservative," replied Edwin Vance.

" All right !—go for either party you like, so long as you keep away from troubling me concerning these other affairs until I send for you. I'll start for Lake Mordaunt in a few days," replied Mr. Horton in reply.

" I suppose we have now said all that there is necessity for upon this subject," he continued. " We will go for a walk, if you would like it, and to-morrow we will see the sights of the place."

The conversation closed and they went for their walk.

CHAPTER XV.

ADA THE MENTOR. A SMART YANKEE.

The soft autumnal haze of a lovely, mid November day—mild, calm and delicious—lay over the landscape, all gorgeous in frost reddened foliage and beautiful in the many tinted, mellow brightness of the Canadian fall.

In this the most pleasing of her seasons, the mild air, the rich colourings of the forest—all red, gold and bright yellows the dying leaves ; mixed in among the dark greens of the pines and firs—the russet fields on which the hazy sunshine falls in

tempered glory ; attractive to the feet, invite the house-dweller out to sweet communion with beautiful Nature in the tender softness she assumes ere around her she draws her white winter mantle, and falls asleep with the dying year.

And how delightfully did the soft beauty of the scene fall upon the eyes of Ethel Mordaunt ; who, for the first time—this charming day—convalescent, yet pale, weakened and thin, has left the house since her heavy illness.

How rapturously she felt the touch of the bright, soft air upon her face as she moved along in new-born pleasure after those many weeks of confinement to a sick-room.

How her heart thrilled within her as the glories of fresh Nature poured their varied beauties into the eyes that for long had been accustomed to nothing brighter than the dim dreariness of a darkened chamber.

How the kindly golden beams of the soft autumn sun fell upon her and gladdened her, as she held out her white wasted hands to bathe them delightfully in the glancing brightness, and laughed with the new exquisite pleasures.

She gathered the frosted scarlet maple leaves, and long russet grasses ; she searched for slender ferns and delicate mosses ; eagerly with the keen enjoyment of a little child—Nature's truest lover ; the delightful zest that only long deprivation could yield.

How lovingly she gazed upon all the well-known objects that seemed to smile back upon her again ; the prized little views, that were prized the more that they were become almost strange. What pleasure—so utterly fresh and new—to stroll from walk to garden ; from wood to lawn and feast her eyes upon everything around her.

The fresh fall air ; the lovely scene ; the delightful sense of this new freedom, revitalized her frame, and sent colour to her cheek and sparkle to her eye.

Ethel Mordaunt drank in her pleasure, and felt happiness

again ; almost happiness—for never cast aside altogether is lately-come sorrow—as she walked with bright pleased face and newly springing step along the carriage-road towards the lake.

Every thing was so beautiful, and it was such pure delight to be out in the beauty again.

“ I will never forget you though—Ally—my little angel sister, lying in your quiet grave. It is wrong for me to be so pleased,” she said to herself as the sense of her pleasure came upon her.

“ I will never forget you, my darling, never ! never ! and I never can believe that I shall be happy again.

“ Your sad early death, my lost little Ally ; poor Reggie's unfortunate marriage ; my own unhappy love would appear to make that a certainty ; yet, after all, what a beautiful world is this of ours, now much there is for which to live, to be thankful and to be happy.”

Ethel walked on, finding a new interest, a new delight with every footstep, but still her thoughts would fly back to the dear past scenes of her sorrow, which are better relegated—if they can be relegated—to deep oblivion.

“ What an ill-timed, what an ill-starred engagement has mine been. I'll starved from its first days. Even in its bright opening that dreadful Wolverton came and sowed dissension between us ; degraded himself—he tried to degrade, and struck at our bright confidence ; so on and so on until came the end.

“ Yet I have been cruel and unjust to Edwin Vance, I fear, I very much fear. I can no longer disbelieve the evidence which has daily accumulated. His mother's and Miss Seaforth's letters I cannot disbelieve, and I have been cruel and unjust.

“ But although I must acknowledge this to him, and freely admit the wrong I have committed, all else had better remain as at present. The engagement was ill-starred, and better for both

of us that it has been ended. He could no longer respect or—
or love one who was so ready to believe ill of him.

"I am to blame, I suppose for so easily doubting; his mother and Agnes Seaforth assert this plainly in their rather cruel letters. I shall acknowledge that also, but all else shall remain as at present.

"I must try to render my life a contented life, and spend it, if I can, for the benefit of others.

"I am not to taste happiness; I suppose."

But as footsteps approached, Ethel looked up from her reverie, and beheld a well known girlish form with active pace come round the turn of the road before her, and she halted as she recognized Ada Dearborn.

"It *is* Ada—yet surely she cannot have walked from Ten-Lakes. How glad I am to see her again."

Ada perceived Ethel at the same moment she was herself seen, and started visibly while an expression of pleasure swept over her face. She quickened her steps, but suddenly hesitated and approached doubtfully as if she were not sure of a welcome; for poor sensitive Ada deeply appreciated the fact that through one of her family, great suffering and injury had been brought home to the Mordaunts.

"Am I not a Dearborn—one of a race to be hated and feared by this young lady, upon whose innocent head we have poured agony," she thought as she came forward, and the thought brought the hot blood to her cheek, and embarrassment to her girlish ease as she met Ethel Mordaunt.

"Why should she recognise me? why should I expect that she should? even though I was her friend and I love her, yet still I will fulfil the duty that has brought me here.

"Miss Mordaunt—Ethel," she said, and could say no more. Looking up then in the face of her she addressed, a glance told her that it was not as she feared. The sweet face bore a smile, all reassuring, though the blue eyes held a surprised look at the

hesitating words. Ethel, at all events, had not harbored the thought that the mere tie of blood should hold the guiltless as the guilty.

"Miss Mordaunt—Ethel," repeated that young lady, laughing. "Why do you say Miss Mordaunt, Ada? Are you afraid of me this morning, or are you so astonished to see me here again that you cannot speak to me. But I am very delighted to meet you, at all events. How have you been, my dear? Why have you not come to see me before this? Now that you have come, though, you shall help me to spend my first bright morning away from the sick room."

"Oh! Ethel, I'm so happy—so glad to see you again. I hardly could believe my eyes that it was indeed you out walking this morning," replied Ada, with loving warmth. "But I was afraid of you, Ethel, for a moment. I was afraid until I looked up into your sweet, good face that you would not speak to me, to one——"

"Afraid that I would not speak to you. Why, Ada? Why should I not speak to you; do I look so very cross?" interrupted Ethel, with her old merry laugh.

"No; not that, certainly. You could not be that, Ethel. Yet I might well question, after all which has occurred, that you could bear to look upon a Dearborn," answered she seriously.

"Oh! Ada, do not say that. We are not going to speak of disagreeables. We are sisters now, and a brave, fearless, true little sister you have proved yourself to be."

"I wish I were not your sister-in-law, dear Ethel, when I became so in such manner as it occurred, but very proud to be your friend."

"Both, Ada, I hope you and I shall ever be. Surely though you have not walked all the way from Ten Lakes; where is your carriage?" said Ethel.

"Yes! I walked. I could not get the carriage this morning, while the walk is nothing this beautiful morning, and I wanted

to see you, Ethel. I have something to shew you which may be of importance."

"No disagreeables, I hope, Ada. Let us enjoy ourselves together this beautiful morning—my first morning under the blue sky, in the bright air, and feasting my eyes once more on God's beautiful works," replied Ethel, gazing around her with sparkling eye. "It seems to me that the word 'important' is so often linked with unpleasant things, Ada."

"I do not think that my business with you, though perhaps important, will be very unpleasant to you, dear Ethel even if it is to me. It is necessary, however that you should be made acquainted with the facts I have come to tell you—necessary that right be done to all."

"Oh! yes; I know, Ada. I have been told of your courageous and most honorable statements to Mr. Vance; statements which so few—so very few—would have made under the circumstances. By none but the right-minded would so hard, so painful a duty, have been accomplished. But you need not have the pain of repeating them to me, dear Ada."

"It is not of that I would speak, Ethel, although belonging to the same shameful story. Pray let me go on," said Ada, rapidly, as though she wished to accomplish an unpleasant duty as speedily as she could.

"Yesterday afternoon," she resumed, "my mother sent me to the room which had been occupied by Emily to gather up and pack away any articles belonging to her which she had not taken away with her upon leaving for their new home some time since. When I had accomplished this, and was engaged in rearranging the apartment, I accidentally came upon a letter which had evidently been tipped over the back of the little drawer of her toilette table.

"As Emily sometime since had made repeated and anxious enquiry for a letter which she stated to have lost, I glanced at the signature and address in order to discover if they would

throw any light upon its value. You may imagine my astonishment upon finding that the letter which I had thus found in my sister's room was addressed by Miss Seaforth to Mr. Vance.

"I have brought it to you, Ethel, for I very much fear that it too strongly confirms, found where it was found, the almost absolute certainty of my sister's guilt in the plot which caused the ending of your engagement."

And Ada, as she related this story, took from her little hand-satchel a letter which she handed to Ethel.

The latter took it mechanically, paused a moment in thought without looking at what she held in her hand, and raising her eyes, replied—

"'Miss Seaforth to Mr. Vance.' Then the letter belongs to Mr. Vance, Ada. I can have nothing to do with it or read it. Why did you not send it to him directly to Toronto?"

"Because from what I have seen of this letter I think you will find it important to yourself as well as to Mr. Vance, and that you should read it. If you will look at the date you will see that he probably received it on the day of our cricket match against the 'County.' You may remember, also, that he received a letter from a lady that morning, for Mr. Mordaunt made some laughing remark to him about his fair correspondent. The date may be important, for Emily was with you here that day, and was not this letter found in her private room?" replied Ada.

"I do not see why you should not read it," she continued, "for if Mr. Vance is innocent towards you he can have no objection; if not innocent, the sooner his guilt is proved the better. Remember too, Ethel, that Mr. Vance states that he wrote to Miss Seaforth, which letter she never received, on the evening of the day I mention; probably the reply to this."

"Yes! and Miss Seaforth, in a letter to me lately, tells me

she wrote to Mr. Vance on a business matter while he was here at Lake Mordaunt. Still I do not like to read the letter," said Ethel, uncertainly.

"I do not see that you should not. This letter you hold in your hand may be an important link in the chain of evidence."

"Yes! I see that the date agrees; he would receive this letter on the Saturday of the match," replied Ethel, who then glanced rapidly over the pages of the epistle.

"Why? What is this that I read? How extraordinary," she exclaimed. "You found this letter in Emily's room, you said, Ada. What a coincidence! How glad I am, and yet how ashamed for myself.

"Ada," she continued, "this is important, for the letter addressed by Mr. Vance to Miss Seaforth, which Emily so successfully induced me to believe as proof of her allegations—as a love letter in fact—is evidently but the rational and reasonable answer to this which I now hold in my hand. Written hurriedly, perhaps, and carelessly, but a natural reply to this.

"Oh! I remember now," she added, "how it came to be so hurried and careless," as her thoughts flew backwards to the events of the evening which followed the cricket match.

"How unjust I have been to him; how unjust and how cruel must I have seemed to him. As I now seem to myself, as this letter throws the light upon conduct all honorable to him, where I imputed it all dishonorable. His steadfast and generous loyalty to her who was left to his care, his father's last legacy; his noble obedience to that father's dying commands; his kindly sympathy for this high-spirited young girl who had made a discovery painful to her honorable pride; have I not in my blind jealousy imputed to his dishonor.

"How wicked I have been. What have I not lost," said Ethel, and, sitting down upon a fallen tree beside her, she dropped her face into her hands and fairly burst into tears.

Ada looked down upon her for a few minutes in silence, un-

willing to interfere, then stepped forward, placing her hand upon her friend's shoulder, and said :

"This is not the right way, Ethel. You have nothing to cry for thus. Your place it is to rejoice. It is I who should rather weep, for is not my sister even now proved to you to be that which I dare not name? Are we not all disgraced? It is I who should rather weep and you rejoice. Have you not discovered for a certainty, which most of us have known for some time past, that you have been deceived by falsehood and fraud. You should rejoice for your undeception."

"I do rejoice, Ada, but I have been so cruel and so hard, and I am ashamed of it."

"In so far that you broke from your engagement without making proper enquiry to verify your apparent cause for so doing, and were in too great haste, you are to blame ; nevertheless, you had apparent cause for your action. However, you owe reparation to Mr. Vance, and you should rejoice that you are enabled to make it," replied Ada gently, but with firmness.

"Yes ! I will make reparation to him in so far as I can, by acknowledging the wrong I have done him, and my own hasty precipitancy in doubting his honor. I have wronged Miss Seaforth also, and must repair that as I best can," sadly replied Ethel, who was yet in tears.

"You must call him back to you, Ethel. That is the best reparation you can make him ; the reparation you are in duty bound to make," and Ada's firm young voice rang upon her ears with new decisiveness.

"That I cannot do. Never again—never again can it be as it has been with us. This terrible thing between us, how could I be his wife ? A wife that he could wholly respect ? No ! All that has passed away. Better as it is," returned Ethel, with lowered head and yet tremulous lips.

"Ethel, this is not right, not like yourself, not like Ethel Mordaunt as she really is," said Ada Dearborn, as she stood be-

fore her friend—a young mentor—a resolute upholder of the right.

“You owe it to Edwin Vance to make him full, complete reparation, and to recall him to you again, else you make but the pretense of justice. What a mockery would it be to him to admit the innocence, which he knows he never lost, yet seek to retain him in the status of the guilty, and to refuse to restore to him that of which you have wrongfully bereft him.”

“To give him back that which is now valueless,” answered Ethel, gloomily. “Could I become his wife after all this? I have forfeited the right.”

“But he has not forfeited *his* right, and it is left to him alone to judge. You are his affianced wife; you must fulfil your engagement,” quickly replied Ada.

“The engagement is at an end; finally closed, and no longer exists,” said Ethel.

“Ended in so far as he is concerned if he chooses, I grant, but not so with respect to yourself. He is at liberty to consider it ended, yet you cannot. If he claims to be free you have not a word to say against it. If he claims the fulfilment of the engagement, you are in justice bound to fulfil it,” returned Ada, with decision and perhaps a little tone of impatience.

“You broke your engagement with Mr. Vance heedlessly and in haste—for certain reasons which imputed bad faith—to say the least, to him,” she resumed, “for conduct if of which he had been guilty, you would have been justified in its abrogation. But he is not guilty; his innocence has been proved, and he still holds towards you the same relation that he did when first you pledged your faith to him. He is to-day the same that he was to you then, no more and no less, and you are as much bound by your soleran promise as you were the day you made it,” continued Ada, with the same marked manner.

Ethel paused a moment ere she replied, and looked up in

some surprise at the determined teachings of the young girl she had herself so often taught.

"What you say may be very true, Ada ; nay it is the truth. But he may not wish it. Could I be his wife ; could he wish me to be his wife when I have brought down upon him all this misery and undeserved obloquy?"

"For which undeserved misery and obloquy you would repay him by making it life-long. You would continue the misery for him and also for yourself. Nonsense, Ethel. You are not yourself to-day or you would not pervert by a diseased sensitiveness, the relic of your illness, most probably your innate sense of right," exclaimed Ada, rather more forcibly than politely.

"Listen to me, Ethel," she continued. I am a Dearborn—one of a family whom you have no cause to love, and, perhaps for that reason, I have no right to speak as I have done, but yet, I think, the sacrifices I have personally made, the mental pains I have endured to bring about this great good, which you so persistently wish to throw aside, give me the right to speak.

"Can you think," she continued, "that since the day when, in my loyalty to the right, I made these statements to Mr. Vance which inculcated my own sister that you should be restored to each other, can you think that my life has been a happy life?"

"Can you imagine that I did not know when I made these statements what I should have to suffer from Emily's angry revenge, my mother's bitter reproaches for the unnatural conduct, as she termed it, rightly enough, perhaps, and my father's saddened face?"

"Can you imagine that it was pleasant to me to bear all these—to prove my sister a criminal—to bring down disgrace upon us in the eyes of the world—to make my father and mother

hold down their heads in shame when they think of the guilt that has come to a daughter of theirs ?

" I knew all these things, yet still I told the tale because it was right for me to tell it.

" Would it not have been more pleasant, more easy for me to have held my peace ; saved myself from disquiet and mental pain ; saved my parents from humiliation, misery and disappointment by keeping these things locked up in my own breast, seeing how all these sacrifices appear to have been uselessly made ?

" Why, I am but a pariah in the house—even my father, though he knows that what I did was right, will not speak to me ; for he cannot but feel that my rightful act has brought shame to him and his. There was a terrible scene the evening that Emily returned from Lake Mordaunt—a terrible scene—but I had to endure it. I had done that which was right, and I did not count the cost.

" Why do not you, also, do that which is right, Ethel Mordaunt ?"

" Oh ! my poor Ada. I never thought of this, selfish, unreflecting that I am," said Ethel, springing to her feet and clasping the out-spoken girl in her arms. " My brave Ada, you are indeed a heroine. You are better, infinitely better, than I am. Who else would have had the moral courage, the undeviating rectitude to have faced these things which you have faced for the sake of two people almost strangers to you, to right them because you felt it was right. I have to learn from you, Ada."

" No, Ethel, not that, not that. It is I who have learned from you. It was you who taught me to do the right, and oh ! what an example have I not had in my poor sister. But, Ethel, she is not all bad. She has sinned against you grievously, I admit, but she is not all bad," said Ada, becoming, in her turn, affected.

" No, she is not all bad, Ada, far from it. She has many

good qualities—many brilliant qualities—though she perverts them. But was Reggie present at the—the terrible scene of which you speak?” asked Ethel, breathlessly ; horror in her eyes at the very thought.

“Fortunately not ! Emily was too wise for that. She sent him out upon an errand,” Ada replied. “He loves her—loves her devotedly, and a very good trait I observe in her is that she endeavours to keep his love by appearing to him, at least, worthy of it. She will make him, I am confident, a good wife, if she is helped and aided,” replied Ada.

“I hope so—I sincerely hope so. We must all aid her in her endeavour,” answered Ethel, fervently.

“The best thing for her, now that she is Reggie’s wife, their destiny irrevocable, would be forgiveness and secrecy to her fault, with, if it is possible, recognition from her husband’s family as his wife. She is not all bad, and would, I think, if thus aided, turn her undoubted talents and advantages to their proper use,” said Ada, with earnestness and feeling.

“She has my forgiveness, at any rate,” exclaimed the generous and noble hearted Ethel. “For Reggie’s sake, and in time I hope, for her own. If she will allow me, I will be her sister in reality, as I am in name, for she is Reggie’s wife.”

“And you will not, in your generous forgiveness, allow her design to succeed by throwing away your reconciliation with Mr. Vance, will you, Ethel?” asked Ada.

But as she spoke, a wagon driven at a rapid speed, appeared round the turn of the road near which they stood, and in another moment had drawn up beside them, while the lagging face of her uncle looked down upon Ethel.

“Uncle Edward ! Is it possible. How glad I am. From whence have you dropped down upon us?” she said, looking up in his face with bright pleasure as she sprang to take his hand and his kiss.

“From the States, to be sure. You do not suppose a Cana-

dian sky could let fall so good an object, do you? How are you, my pretty girl? and you are really out of doors again," exclaimed Mr. Horton, jumping out of his carriage beside them. "Kiss your old uncle, Ethel, who is glad to see you so well again. But how thin and pale you are. You little goose for what did you make yourself so ill crying over your spilt milk.

"Miss Dearborn," he continued, "I'm very glad to see you once more, and very glad to see you two together also. You are becoming very pretty, Ada—quite a belle. Were I not so old I would ring the belle."

"Such a vile joke. If your brain is not capable of better than that specimen you would be wiser to try Canadian air for a while and improve," replied Ethel, laughing.

"A capital idea, Ethel, as Ada here would find if she will permit the experiment. You have been reading letters, I see. You are improving fast when you get back to that again, Ethel. But no mischief this time, I hope."

"No, Mr. Horton," Ada answered. "I brought this letter to Ethel for her inspection, and have at length convinced her that her very ill-used affianced is not the villain she has believed him to be."

"Oh! that is it. Very good, indeed; the time for a change has come. Give me the letter, Ethel," interrupted Mr. Horton, hastily.

"But it is not mine, uncle. The letter belongs to Mr. Vance," replied Ethel.

"Give me the letter, Ethel. I want it," he repeated, and advanced to take it from her.

"I cannot, uncle. You should not ask me. It is Mr. Vance's letter."

"Give me the letter," and this time he very coolly snatched it from her hand and proceeded to place it securely in his pocket-book.

"But, uncle——" recommenced Ethel.

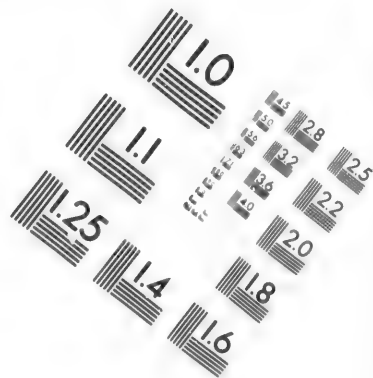
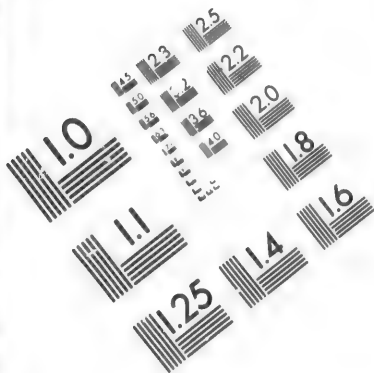
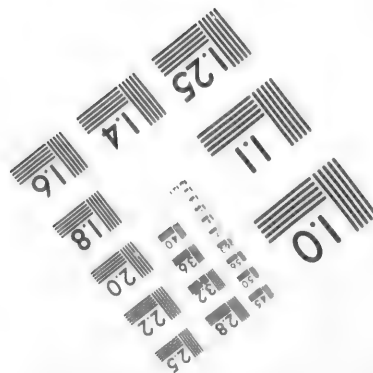
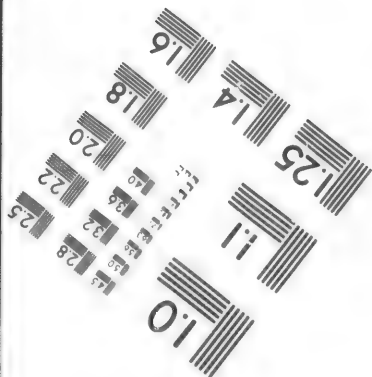
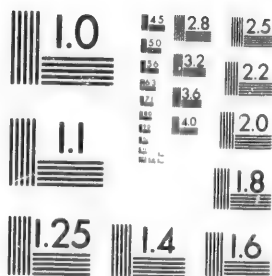


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"But, Ethel," he repeated, laughing. "This letter is safer in my hands than yours, and I require it. Is my sister at home and Mordaunt?"

"Yes, uncle; both at home. Give me back the letter, uncle. It is not right you should take it, and I shall not allow——"

"Good morning, young ladies. I have no time to waste in conversing upon trifles. I shall see you by and bye when you get back to the house."

Saying which Mr. Horton nimbly jumped into his carriage, letter and all, and drove onwards.

"Drive us home, uncle," exclaimed Ethel after him. "Drive us home with you."

"Could not think of it, ladies; very sorry to deprive myself of the pleasure of your charming society, but I shall have time now to search all your goods and chattels before you can reach the house. You have something which I propose to appropriate on Mr. Vance's part, and the moment seems opportune. Farewell!" Mr. Horton laid whip to the horse and drove off, laughing at them.

A few minutes afterwards when Ethel and Ada entered the house—the latter having, with some difficulty, agreed to allow herself to be driven home in place of walking back again—they arrived in time for a little dramatic scene.

Mr. Mordaunt and Mr. Horton sat conversing together in the large hall, while at the moment of their entry Mrs. Mordaunt came in from the stairway with a lady's dress hanging upon her arm, which dress Ethel immediately recognized as her own.

"Here it is, Edward: the dress which Ethel wore on the day that she was taken ill. But what do you want with it? I am sure I cannot imagine what use you are going to make of Ethel's dress," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt to her brother.

"Give it me here, Florence. I'll show you directly to what

use I will put it, and make you blush for all your thick heads," replied Mr. Horton, as he took the dress from his sister's arm.

"What are you doing with my dress, uncle? What business have you with it? You steal my letters first and now my pretty dress. One of my nicest summer dresses, too. What are you going to do with it?" exclaimed Ethel, running up to snatch it away from him.

"What an I going to do with it!" he replied, putting aside her hand and laughing at her. "I am going to do what none of you had sense to do. I am going to look in the pockets," and with clumsy manipulation Mr. Horton tumbled up the dress in search of the desired receptacle; not a very easy task for any gentleman. His perseverance was, however, at length rewarded; his hand accidentally slipped into the hole, as he irreverently termed it, and he drew it forth holding three letters.

"See here! numbsculls; these are the letters for which you have searched the whole house for weeks past," he exclaimed, holding them up in triumph before them.

"You a born Yankee too, Florence. I am ashamed of you. Not smart enough to think of this dress, when everything pointed to it as the hiding place of these letters," he continued, in mock indignation. "I verily believe the Canadian air makes gross and fat the brain. Did you not find Ethel insensible in the room in which her interview with that arch deceiver Emily had taken place? Certainly you did, and it follows as a natural consequence that if the letters had not been left upon the table, they must be in the pocket of the dress which Ethel had worn that day. Frankly acknowledge this now, stupids."

"How polite you are to-day, Horton," said Mr. Mordaunt with his good natured laugh. "But are these the letters that all the rumpus has been made about?"

"Yes! Certainly they are—two of them at least, and I have had to come up from New York to find them for you. A good thing, you'll admit, to have a Yankee in the family to show you

how to be smart now and again," replied Mr. Horton. "But there are three letters here. I only require two of them. Here! Ethel, you may have this one; I've read two or three lines of it, but it is *too* sickening. All love, pah!" and Mr. Horton tossed over to Ethel the letter she had received from Edwin Vance on the morning of her illness.

"These others I impound upon the part of my client, Mr. Edwin Vance, whose amateur lawyer and detective I now have the honour to be," continued Mr. Horton, putting them away into his pocket-book. "Here, Ethel, you may have this dress too, I don't want it any longer; but you may have it again if you like. It is of no use to me," and with an air of sublime generosity he threw back to Ethel her ill-used dress.

"Thank you, uncle, you are very kind indeed. I thought, perhaps, that you wished to steal it also, as you did the three letters which you have respectively robbed from my hand and my dress," returned Ethel, with a little of her old sauciness.

"Since when, pray," she continued, have you resumed the *role* of private detective for—for—for——"

"Mr. Vance you would say, Ethel," interrupted her uncle, and completing the sentence for her. "You little goose, are you afraid to mention his name?"

"Well! he came to see me down at my place some time ago," he continued, "with tears in his eyes, begging me for pity's sake to take hold of this terrible affair for him, and get him back his—what shall I call it, Ethel?—sweetheart, affianced wife, dearly beloved, anything you like—for him again. As he certainly has been very badly treated I very good-naturedly consented, especially as I wished to see you all, and so I am here as Edwin's advocate.

"I also intend to act as Ethel's advocate and judge of the cause into the bargain," he resumed, "with consequent prospects of its speedy termination."

"Yes! I told Vance that he had better go to you as the

person most likely to aid him and bring Ethel to her senses," said Mr. Mordaunt as he rose and prepared to leave the room.

"Oh, you did, did you, Mr. Mordaunt? Much obliged to you, I'm sure, for dragging me four hundred miles from home, with the prospect of a couple of thousand more or so before I return, for an affair that happens to be pretty well settled already, from what I hear from Ada," replied Mr. Horton, facetiously.

"Indeed! I did not know it. What news have you brought Ada?" exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, turning to her curiously.

"A letter, which I have accidentally discovered, Mr. Mordaunt, and which is now in Mr. Horton's possession, has convinced Ethel that it was not Mr. Vance, who——"

"Is the big rascal she so politely claimed him to be," interrupted Mr. Horton, quickly, to save Ada the pain of further explanation.

"Thanks, Ada, my brave girl," he continued. "I fear, though, that the case against your sister—now Mrs. Reggie Mordaunt—looks rather black just at present; but, by your goodness and courage, your unflinching conscientiousness, your innate right-mindedness, you have redeemed her, my dear girl, and it behooves us all to forgive and forget this matter, which is now happily deprived of its harm."

As he said the words, he went over to Ada, and shook her heartily by the hand, with many a kind word and compliment, until poor Ada's eyes filled with tears as she disclaimed them.

Mr. Horton, on returning to his seat, took from his pocket-book the three important letters, which he had obtained from Ethel's hand and her long-hidden-away dress, and devoted himself to a careful perusal and comparison of their contents.

"All very evident; they carry their conviction with them," he said, when he had concluded his reading.

He handed them, then, to Mr. Mordaunt, who had remained conversing with Ada, with the words—

"Read these letters, Mordaunt, you can judge for yourself.

These two are the proofs which Emily gave Ethel, in support of her allegations, and which I obtained from the dress. Ethel will recognize them, I suppose. The other is that of which Ada has just spoken."

Ethel's father and mother, for the first time, then read the letters that had wrought so much unhappiness for them all. That the perusal was of deep interest to them, may well be imagined, for from these two simple letters, what sorrow had not come. Illness that had so nearly brought their lovely daughter to the grave, unhappiness, misery to her, the bitter cup that awaited her recovery ; and, lastly, their son's marriage—that very bitter cup—which seemed the culmination of all the evil.

It is not to be wondered that their attention was absorbed—that it was with heartstirring emotions they read the letters which had done all this, and rejoiced that the evil was in some measure passing away.

"Yes, it is all very clear !" said Mrs. Mordaunt, as she rose from the perusal of the dismal records. "Mr. Vance has been wronged ; bitterly wronged, and we have all been very unjust. Poor Ethel ! How hard, and how cruel has all this been upon you !"

"Yes, indeed !" exclaimed Ada, "very hard and very cruel for both. But the deception has come happily to light, and Mr. Vance must be righted." As she spoke, she turned meaningly towards Ethel.

"What could have been Emily's motive for her so apparently unnecessary, yet cruel, interference ? Can you imagine, Ada ?" continued Mrs. Mordaunt.

"I would prefer that you did not ask me, Mrs. Mordaunt, if you can spare me. I may say, however, that I think, at the first—at the first, only—she desired herself to marry Mr. Vance, for the reason that he was a rich man. Afterwards, other reasons impelled her, I suspect, which I would rather

not mention, if you would excuse me," returned Ada, politely, yet with decision.

"If it will not pain you too much, Ada, please tell us all. She is our daughter, now, and being such, the sooner all is forgiven and forgotten, the better it will be for us all; but to that end we should know everything, else the forgiveness cannot be, as it should be, perfect and lasting," said Mrs. Mordaunt, appealingly to her young visitor.

"Mrs. Mordaunt, I am very certain that Emily most bitterly regretted from her heart the cruel and wicked act which she had committed, when once she realized its terrible consequences. I know, now, that she regrets it. I know, also, how desirous she is to be—and, I am sure, that you will find she is—a good wife to Reggie. I know that she strives to be such, and that she strives to retain his love and his respect. Probably, her very desire in this not unamiable trait, will be the means of making her again a good woman, and to this end, she should be aided in the attempt," answered Ada, speaking in generous sisterly terms. She then continued—

"I will tell you, therefore. Mrs. Mordaunt, the little that I know, in order that this help be thus extended to her. I think she would have altogether abandoned her design when she discovered how delusive had been her hopes of Mr. Vance, if you had not, unfortunately, as it proved, asked me, in place of herself, to accompany your party to Cacouna this last summer, and if she had not become aware that Reggie's attentions to her had been forbidden. She was very much angered at this, and a little disagreement at which I understood she had had with Ethel, relative to a remark she had made concerning Mr. Vance, shortly after the cricket match, confirmed her in her design.

"But after Ethel's illness became known to her, she was in a terrible state of remorse and fear, as I can now explain, although I did not then understand," continued Ada, in her loving right-mindedness, certainly not imputing the worst motives.

"Yes, she had not thought before-hand of the mischief she would occasion," said Mr. Horton, "But, as I have taken all these affairs into my own hands—Ethel's, Vance's, Emily's, and Reggie's—I must forbid either of you present to interfere by word, deed or, especially, by letter—unmanageable articles,—in any way, whatever, until I give you leave. Vance has agreed to this condition ; you must, also, and I will bring all out, as well I can from the slough of despond.

"The dinner-bell—sweet sound. I'm hungry." With which remark, Mr. Horton closed the conversation.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN HIS MERCY.

"Shall I tell Reggie? Shall I tell him?"

"He loves me as I do not deserve to be loved. He thinks of me as all that I ought to be, and am not. Can I bear to lose his love?"

"Can I endure that he shall see me as I am?"

"Shall I tell Reggie? Shall I tell him?"

So Emily Mordaunt questioned herself ; questioned herself in anxiety and miserably painful thought ; her beautiful face drawn, and her white brow contacted with the lines—the pained lines—of distracting fear and regret.

"Shall I tell Reggie? Shall I tell him?"

Her lips moved with the unuttered words ; her eyes strained themselves with greater fixedness, as she gazed from the pretty bay window, where she stood among her flowers, over the broad, placid waters of Lake Ontario ; gazed, yet saw not, so intent with its burning reflections, was her laden mind.

Bright Nature lay spread out, all glorious and inviting. In soft, pure beauty, calling to mankind to see—and rejoice in the seeing—the bright world God gives them in which to be happy;

to drink in the lavish beauty, that, the influencing lesson, it shall ; teach, should make them happy, as it refines them from the evil to the good.

Emily Mordaunt gazes out upon the radiant scene, yet sees not. Over the sparkling waters, all bright as the golden sunlight, over the charming autumnal landscape, green, and gold, and scarlet, over the pretty Lake-shore village wherein they have taken up their abode ; upon the bright blue sky, arching down its heavenly bounding-in over all, her eyes rove—yet see not ; for she is not happy.

As she stands, among her flowers, in her pretty drawing-room window, she is still the same Emily Dearborn to first appearance.

Handsome, as splendidly handsome as ever, she yet conveys an indefinable sense of change, some marking difference from the Emily Dearborn of the past.

Beauty is ever pleasing ; and, as Emily Dearborn, she had been beautiful ; as Emily Mordaunt, she is still beautiful—more beautiful. Even although the sharp markings of painful
light are visible upon her face, she is yet more beautiful.

Quiet, neat, well—not showily—dressed, she has come to look like a lady ; the dash, the fastness, the vain pretension of the Emily Dearborn of past days, all gone from her ; and, as she is the more pleasing, so is she the more beautiful.

So she stands in her pretty drawing-room alone, in the bright morning, waiting for her husband, and drowned in harrassing thought. In the midst of light and beauty, she is yet miserable and unhappy.

Yet the scene was very fair, her every surrounding pleasant. She had not grandeur, it is true, or riches, but all about her was bright, tasteful, and handsome. Everything that, to appearance, should have made her life a happy life, was hers, if mere comfort constituted all requisites for happiness.

Her husband loved her, was devoted to her, and, unconsci-

ously looked up to her. She had no lack of material wants, or even luxuries. Her house was pretty, the drawing-room in which she stood, was tasteful, handsome and cheery. If there were not the evidences of wealth around her, there were not either the evidences of poverty. If she could not command pretentious display, she could command everything to make her days bright and pleasurable.

She should have been happy ; but, to-day, she certainly is not happy.

"What is this that has come to me, this change that makes me fear ? Am I not as safe now, as upon the day I married Reggie Mordaunt ? Why then do I fear ?

"What has made me the coward that I am ? Am not I his wife, and safe in that ?

"Yes, Emily Mordaunt, in so far as personal safety lies, you are safe. That you can answer yourself, yet it does not now satisfy.

"Could I bear to lose his fresh, young love ? Could I bear that he should look upon me with other eyes ? Not for all that earth can give me could I endure the thought that he might some day, look upon me as other than the fair, young girl, so fair, and so true, in his imagination, whom he loved and married ?

"How can I tell him the terrible story, and tear from around myself the bright halo with which his fond eyes have invested me ?

"To him I am all good, all fair, all that I ought to be, and am not. How can I tell him, to lose all these prized investings ? Lose the love that has become so dear to me ; that has become so necessary to me !

"Shall I give him my own version, deceive him again, and keep his love ? Shall I risk that the dreadful truth be made known to him by another in all its baleful lights ? Better this. How can I again deceive his trusting young soul ?

"Shall I tell Reggie ? Shall I tell Reggie ?

"Would I do again this thing that I have done ? Now, as I am—would I do it again, in like circumstances ? No, not for worlds, not for all the bright earth could give ; I shudder at the thought ! Not for worlds would I do it !

"Why ? Why, then, would I not again ? Am not I the same woman—the same in all things that I was when I committed my sin—as I was the day I married him, whom I looked upon as a mere boy, whose only merit was that he could save me from the consequences of my sin ?

"But, do I look upon him as that mere boy to-day, whom I married—without love—to save myself from the prison cell ?

"Emily Mordaunt, you are changed ; changed, indeed !

"My Reggie ! Your true love—blind, foolish, unthinking though it be—has made its own reward, all worthless though it is. Reggie ! I love you ! I love you ! and I fear, I tremble, for your love, that I may lose it !

"But he has not been told ! He may not be told the story that is now known. If I could but think it might always be so !

"How generous have these Mordaunts been ? How noble, and how kind ? For weeks they must have known all ; yet not one word. Though I have injured them so very deeply, not one word in retaliation. Can I wonder that they do not like me as their son's wife ? I do not like myself in that quality. Even though their reluctance may be for that son's sake, yet it is for my sake, too, that his wife may be in his eyes the wife she ought to be in reality. How noble ! How generous ! How kind !

"But Mr. Vance may not be equally forgiving. Why should he be ? Has he not suffered vilely through me, at my hands ? Why should I look for mercy at his ?

"Shall I tell Reggie ? Shall I tell Reggie ?

"Oh, how hard to decide ! What is there for me to do ? Why may I not keep him, my bright young lover, the hus-

band whom I love? Keep him, as when he loved me at the first, when he deemed me all that was lovable, as he deems me still; for I have tried to keep his love.

"One day more—one day more of the trusting love and faith that has conquered my heartlessness and made me his, that has forced me to strive to be worthy of him.

"How shall I decide? Shall I tell him to-day?

"He will forgive me, that I know; but, how can I endure that he should think that it had become necessary to forgive? How can I endure that the fresh brightness of his love shall be dimmed in shame for his wife?

"How shall I decide? Shall I tell Reggie?"

So ran her thoughts—painful, harrassing, distressed—as she still stood gazing out over the broad waters.

Doubtful, hesitating, fearful, her mind, in its agony, veered from the dark picture that confronted her on one side to the equal terror that arose on the other for her, to find not aiding light, nor shining hope in either.

Emily Mordaunt was indeed changed. This surely was not the Emily of the past days?

For where was now the rapid capability, the brilliant inventiveness of deceit that would—in those days—have so easily circumvented a worse difficulty, and safely tided over her self-reliant feet from a more threatening flood.

Where was all that now? What had brought to her the change?

Why was there now raised before her the menacing sword of avengement, when she no longer dared to avert her eyes; when she dared no longer seek to turn aside from her the glittering edge.

In His justice or in His mercy had the silent workings of the Omnipotent Hand brought to her the change that she might see, when again was upheld the threatening terror. Upheld in

threatening that she might see. Withheld to be—in His mercy, how well we may know—if she saw.

In His mercy—for he recks not of His justice before His mercy. He—unseen acting—had touched with warm life the cold heart, that through her love, she might fear and see.

In His loving mercy to His creatures; in His high justice.

Still she stood at the window, intent upon her thoughts, and gazed out, unseeing, upon the wide landscape. Still she stood, and thought her pained thoughts, until, at length, her eyes fell—fell with meaning light—upon the approaching form of her young husband. She started up from her reverie, and rose to meet him at the door with her welcoming kiss.

"Is it you, Emily? The sweet little wife that always meets me at the door," he said, as he took the tempting proffer. "How pretty you are, to-day, with your soft, bright eyes, and sweet, pale face!

"Is breakfast, ready, Emily?" he continued, I've had a long walk of it, and I am as hungry as a young bear."

"Yes, Reggie; in two or three minutes you shall have your hunger appeased. We had to await your return," she said, and walked with him into the little breakfast room.

"Have you any letters for me, this morning, Reggie?" she asked, as he threw himself into a chair by the window, gaily humming a tune, as he looked out and awaited breakfast.

"Yes, I have, Emily; I forgot them, before, by Jove. Here is one for you—from Ada, I think, and I have one from my father," he answered, as he rose, and handed her a letter.

"From Ada!" hastily ejaculated Emily, in a tone, of mingled surprise and disquietude, and, as Reggie seated himself again to read his letter, she took hers to the other side of the room, ere she broke the seal.

"TEN LAKES, Nov. 30th, 1873.

"MY DEAR SISTER,—

"As an occurrence, affecting yourself in some measure has,

within the last few days, taken place here, I think it is but right that I should inform you, although you will not probably thank me for my share in it.

"However, though that may be, it is but right that you should be made aware of the facts.

"While arranging anew, by my mother's request, the apartment which you had occupied when at home, I, accidentally, found a letter at the back of the little drawer of your toilette table, and at once perceived that, although it had been in your possession, it was addressed by Miss Seaforth to Mr. Edwin Vance.

"Surprised and disconcerted as I was by this discovery, I kept it to myself, until, upon long and painful reflection, I saw that it was my duty either to send it to Mr. Vance, or, under the attendant circumstances, take it to Miss Mordaunt.

"The latter of these courses, and, as I think, the preferable for all parties, I have adopted.

"Knowing, as you must know, the contents of this letter, I need hardly tell you that, when once Miss Mordaunt was induced to read it, all doubts of the honesty and truth of Mr. Vance were removed from her mind.

"It is not for me, my dearest sister, to add a word beyond the bare statement of facts. I have, therefore, but to say,—although I am not, perhaps, justified in saying what I know—that all now rests upon yourself, dear Emily. Your own happiness, your husband's reconciliation with his family—I dare add—your own, also, all rests upon yourself now ; upon a word.

"With fond love to yourself and Reggie,

"I am, your affectionate sister,

"ADA DEARBORN."

Emily quietly finished her letter, refolded and put it away carefully. Excepting that the little pained lines became again visible upon her face, she did not shew, outwardly, that she was disturbed, but there was a tremour in her voice, as she asked Reggie, "what news he had from home?"

"Nothing from home, in particular, Emily, excepting that Ethel is quite well again, and Uncle Horton is with them. Papa writes though, strongly urging that I should go back, at once, to College, to prepare myself for a profession, of my own choice,

too, and he offers—my generous father—upon condition that I agree to do so, to allow us another thousand dollars a year, and, in addition, to pay the University fees. He does not wish me to remain idle, he says. But, wonder of wonders, Emily ! You are very kindly mentioned ! What is coming next ?” replied Reggie, happily, a pleased expression brightening his face.

“They mentioned me, kindly, did you say, Reggie ?” said Emily, after a moment, in a voice she, with difficulty, restrained to steadiness.

“Yes, they did !” answered Reggie, looking up from his letter, surprisedly. “All of them. Why shouldn’t they ? It was time, I think.”

Emily did not speak again for a few minutes, but sat, lost in thought, while Reggie re-read his letter. At length, however, she woke from her reverie, and asked—

“Do you think of going to Toronto, back to College, Reggie ?”

“Well, what do you think of the scheme, Emily ? I’ll do that which best pleases *you*,” he replied.

“Then go, Reggie. We will go at once, as your father wishes.”

“By Jove ! Emily, considering the way in which you have been treated by them all, I did not expect that that should have been your reason. If you had assigned the doubling of our income as the motive of your advice, it is what could only have been looked for. You possess more Christian charity than they do, my darling,” replied Reggie, warmly, and looking upon his wife, whom he so invested with the good that was not hers.

“No, Reggie, not that ! Not that ! If you but knew all, you would not say so,” returned Emily, with rapid deprecation. “It was not of the money, though, that I thought, really. But we will go to Toronto, I would like it, and your father is right.”

A pause ensued ; when, in low, tremulous tones—for coming

upon her in her already softened mood these further kindnesses—"coals of fire," under which she could no longer bear up, she continued—

"Reggie! Listen to me for a moment, please. I have something to tell you. You believe me to be a good woman, who——"

"What? Believe you to be what? What are you driving at, Emily?" interrupted Reggie, but as he spoke, a loud knock at the door *interrupted* him, and he sprang to his feet.

"Who can this be, I wonder?" he said, as he looked out of the window to see for himself.

"It is uncle, as sure as I'm alive, Emily! What in the world brings him to see us, I wonder?" and Reggie ran out to open the door, without waiting for the servant's coming.

"Hallo, uncle! How are you? From what strange cloud did you drop down upon us? I'm awfully glad to see you! Come in. Why, I thought you were at Lake Mordaunt?"

"Well, Reggie, you're looking bright enough, at any rate!" replied Mr. Horton, shaking hands with his nephew. "Of course I was at Lake Mordaunt, but I'm here now, and I want some breakfast. Where's your wife?"

"Just sitting down to breakfast. Here, let me help you off with your over-coat," said Reggie, energetically suiting his action to his words, and tugging off the garment in question with frantic eagerness. "In this way, uncle, you're just in time. If we had known you were coming, we would have had pork and beans, pumpkin pie, and fish-balls and doughnuts, and New England rum and cider, and everything else that a Yankee could like, ready for you," continued the vociferous Reggie, as he fairly pulled his uncle along.

"You donkey! I'm not a Yankee, I'm a New Yorker! Do you think I want all these things for my breakfast? Certainly not the New England rum, at any rate," replied Mr. Horton.

In another moment, he found himself in the presence of Emily Mordaunt.

"Good morning, Emily. How do you do?" he said, holding out his hand to her, while he looked her steadily in the face, as if to learn there what had passed, or was passing in her soul.

She shewed some embarrassment; she blushed as she rose to receive him, and she was not at ease.

He knew that he had come upon a delicate mission, and he knew, also, that *she* knew that he had not come solely upon a visit to see them, that she must be aware that there lay something beneath; and he, notwithstanding his mission, being wholly unabashable and coolness itself, resolved that she, also, should not feel uncomfortable.

He had noted, too, the embarrassment and the blush, so unwonted for Emily Dearborn, as he had known her, and he mentally determined to discover, if he could, why there had come the embarrassment and the blush. He continued then to her—

"I am very glad to see you, again, Emily, and to see that you are looking so well. Reggie, also, well and happy. Very comfortable, too, I perceive;" as he glanced around the room, and out upon the bright Ontarian waters.

"And I have come to ask for some breakfast this morning, my dear."

"I am very glad of that, Mr. Horton. It shall be served in a moment. I am very pleased that you came to our little house, in place of going to the grand hotel," replied Emily, with a smile, although the startled expression of her face had not disappeared.

"Oh, I came on purpose to see you both," answered Mr. Horton, laying a little stress upon the last word. "How are you getting on together in your new life? You both seem happy and comfortable enough."

"Why should we not be happy, uncle? I am, I know, even

though I did run away with Emily contrary to the wishes of my friends. I don't regret the step."

"Oh! I do not suppose that you do regret it, Reggie. I do not suppose, either, that you would regret any step that you might take, be it right or wrong," replied Mr. Horton, laughingly. He turned and added, "But what say you, Emily?"

"I do not regret *that*, Mr. Horton, either, but if you would —"

Emily could not finish her sentence, but her large, bright eyes, which he saw became damped by a tear, were raised to his face with a glance that was imploring.

Their breakfast was served, to which Mr. Horton and his nephew, at least brought good appetites. The former enjoyed his meal hugely, as he chatted away in all pleasantness and good nature with Reggie and his wife. He was merry and cheerful, he used his happy wit that they might feel at their ease and laugh; he was jubilant, and he laughed himself.

He questioned Emily as to her housekeeping and her employments; her servants, and her cookery-book, and was complimentary when he learned she kept but one servant, and supervised her own cooking. He questioned Reggie as to his occupations, and gave him a homily upon his idle life.

He anecdoted—as his countrymen would say—and related laughable stories of his experiences, striving to shew them that he was at ease, and that he expected that they would be at ease with him, also.

But beneath the current of his pleasant talk, there ran the counter current of his thoughts.

"What an anomaly is this human nature of ours—this strange, inexplicable created nature, of which we have our being? What are not the inconsistencies, the devious changes and swayings with which it yields, or adapts itself to the force of its surroundings? How it is bent towards the good or drawn towards the evil, as its daily contact is with the good, or with the evil.

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"The things of to-day that forcibly impinge upon its easy impressions, obliterate, wipe away and replace the firm, imprinted teachings of but a yesterday's date. The good shall supplant the evil, the evil the good ; insensibly, inappreciably, unconsciously—but none the less effectually—as the good or the evil shall be the nearest influence surrounding ; and from that nearest influence, be it good or be it evil, our poor human nature—chameleon-like, a mere reflection—takes, in some degree, at least, its immediate colouring.

"The firmest principle, the highest, the purest inclination for good cannot endure, for a day's space even, contact with evil, and retain unsullied spotlessness. The impressible mind takes the bias of its surroundings.

"Nor can the evil nature, however evil, breathe evil altogether in an atmosphere of good. The beneficent influence will prevail and leave its leaven, even though the to-morrow may wash it out by its new surroundings.

"Poor, unstable, human heart ; with the good always, it shall turn to to the good ; with the evil always, it bends to the evil.

"And this woman who sits before me, an example, I begin to think ; for if this is the same Emily Dearborn, who used to be, I cannot quite believe.

"Handsome, brilliant, clever as she was, what an unamiable, what a detestable character she presented, but a few weeks since, to those, at least, who could see her as she really was. An incorrigible flirt, a pretentious, dashing young lady of the day ; blatant, impertinent, loud, yet a deep and scheming intriguante, selfish and designing, capable of almost any baseness to advance her ends ; determined to advance them, and who has committed crime for the mere gratification of personal spite and revenge.

"Marrying, too, a man whom she did not love, with the sole object of saving herself from the consequences of her sin ; a marriage which did not bring her wealth or any of her darling

ambitions ; neither love, money, high place, or power. A marriage which, viewing her in the light she has always exhibited, could fairly be said to be most disappointing ; into which nothing but pressing danger could have driven her ; a marriage from which discord, unhappiness, and ruin for both, could safely have been predicted, and yet from which, neither discord, misery nor ruin, seem likely to spring.

“ In all this evil of hers, there must have been some latent good ; she is shewing it unmistakeably. She has made her husband happy, and she tries to make him happy ; in that very trial, if I mistake not, she is herself happy and better. She has been in contact, of late, with good, instead of the former evil.

“ I can see, also, that the shadow of her sinful act has fallen upon her from her very happiness. She regrets, and she fears it, which she would not have done before. Why ? From whence springs the change ?

“ She knows that the worst injury likely to be inflicted upon her now, would be the making known to her husband of the thing she has done.

“ Would she have cared for that a month ago ? No ! She would not have cared, not one straw.

“ But she fears that now ; she feared *me* when I entered her house, one short hour ago. She fears me now.

“ She wishes that her husband should think well of her ; she endeavours that he should think well of her, and she has succeeded. Emily Mordaunt is not the Emily Dearborn of passed days ; she is a better creature.

“ Her face shews it, her dress shews it, her every movement shews it ; her husband shews it, and her house shews it. Nor can it be the deception-working of the old Emily Dearborn spirit either, as it was impossible that she should know of my coming upon them to-day, for the good reason that none but myself and the Mordaunts were aware of the intention.

"No, she is a changed woman ! But what then has created the change ?

"That she still desires to rise is probable, her natural tastes and proclivities would still lead her on to that, but it does not follow, therefore, that she should commence her rise by making her husband happy and her home pleasant.

"The Emily of passed days would rather have resorted to subtile intrigue, some grand, immediate scheme, which would have left her careless of these ; would rather have chosen old devices in old evil ways for the purpose.

"What has created the change ?

"I have it ! I have struck the key-note, and all—all that I have seen to-day—strikes in unison with it !

"Emily Mordaunt is not the old Emily Dearborn, because she has learned to love her husband !

"Her marriage fixed her destiny ; placed her in new surroundings ; struck away the evil promptings and ambitions in which she lived ; replaced them with those of a better origin, and—more than all—she has learned to love her husband !

"I have struck the key-note ; I'm convinced. I shall be very glad if it is so ; nor will it be a very great work to discover the truth."

In such direction ran the current of Mr. Horton's thoughts as he sat at the breakfast table with his young hosts, while he chatted, laughed, and made the meal pleasant to them.

Reggie was at ease from the first, while from Emily he had taken her embarrassment, although his keen eye could yet see the anxiety and doubt in her face.

Still he had made things pleasant, and he liked her none the less that he could trace her shade of fear.

His next object was to get rid of Reggie for the morning, as his self-imposed mission lay with Emily, alone, and he cast about in his mind for some method by which to achieve his desired object.

When they had risen from the table, Reggie, however, settled the matter himself, unexpectedly, thereby saving his visitor the trouble of getting him away from the house.

"Emily," he said, turning towards his wife, "I'll have to leave Mr. Horton to your care this morning, for a time, unless he would like to go with me, for a sail upon Lake Ontario. I have promised some young gentlemen of this place to accompany them to witness the last yachting races of the season. I do not suppose I shall be away all day, at any rate. A ten-mile race around the island, that is all.

"Will you go with me, uncle? or, should you prefer to stay at home, with Emily?" he continued.

"Thanks, Reggie; I'd rather remain with Emily, and talk. I do not care for yachting at this late season, it is too cold. I am tired, also, with last night's railway travel. You go and enjoy yourself; never mind me," replied Mr. Horton, very glad of the opportunity.

"A yacht race! Oh, Reggie! You musn't go to-day; the season is too late to be safe. Stay with us, Reggie, don't go to-day!" exclaimed Emily, stepping forward in alarm, and only restrained from further demonstration of it, by Mr. Horton's presence. She did not, probably, relish, either, the prospect of the *tete-a-tete* now rendered inevitable with that gentleman.

"But I must go, Emily. I promised to go. There is no danger, you goose. I could drink up the dirty little pond before it could drown *me*. You shall see me back before four o'clock."

"Oh, be careful, Reggie! Promise me you will be careful!" exclaimed Emily, with the vain anxiety which ladies exhibit when their liege lords mention an inclination for cold water in quantity larger than a pailful. "Why did you not tell me of this before? I shall be so anxious, I wish you were not going."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, I suppose. Never thought of it. But come and help me on with my great-coat, Emily, there's a

darling, and don't bother about danger. I must be off for I am late," he answered, lightly, and, in another minute he had left the house.

When Emily returned to the apartment in which she had left her guest, she knew that a trial was before her, and that it would soon be made manifest whether Mr. Horton had come for peace or for war. She knew that he possessed power against her to wage a terrible war upon her and her's, and her heart sank a little in view of the coming ordeal. But she had never been one to flinch from an ordeal, however fearful its prospect, or to evade it by escape.

"Shall we adjourn to the drawing-room, Mr. Horton? You shall have an easy chair and the morning papers, if you wish them?" she said, as she led the way to the apartment in question.

She seated herself, and took up some work dear to ladies, while her visitor amused himself for a few moments at the window, speaking upon indifferent subjects and the pleasant view before his eyes. At length, however, he approached, took a seat beside her, and said, kindly—

"You seem to be very comfortable, here, Emily. Comfortable and home-like. A pretty little house, and very pleasant surroundings."

"Yes, Mr. Horton, we have nothing of which to complain, Reggie and I," she answered, without, however, raising her eyes from her work.

"And, Reggie appears to be happy, also, I imagine, Emily?"

"I am very glad that you think so; I hope that he is happy, I believe that he is happy," she returned, still without looking up and busily moving her fingers.

"So much the better for him—and for you, also."

He paused then for a minute or two, as she did not reply, while he surveyed the graceful, but uneasy, figure before him.

"She is very pretty and lady-like, now that she dresses more quietly. Her marriage has improved her in some respects, at all events," he thought. I wonder, though, if the change has reached her heart? If so, there is happiness for Reggie, yet. But let me get back to my work, while I have the opportunity."

And then, quietly, in his pleasant accents, he said—

"Emily, my dear, I am come to-day, expressly to see you. I have something to say to you."

There was a little start—a little pause—an evident tremor on Emily's part.

"I am ready to hear anything you may have to tell me, Mr. Horton," she answered, in a low, yet distinct voice. "Pray go on!"

"Would you be surprised to hear that a reconciliation will soon take place between Ethel Mordaunt and Edwin Vance? The difficulties which caused their separation having been overcome. There has been a full discovery of all—of all, Emily. As you were concerned, you know, as we all know, in that separation, I wish to tell you this at first."

Mr. Horton, as he said these words—which bore a significance so startling for his listener—leant over towards her still speaking in his same kind tones, but with earnest seriousness, while he looked steadfastly into her down-bent face.

The work that Emily held dropped from her fingers; she sat, still and motionless in the same down-bent attitude, save that her hands twitched nervously, until she locked them together. Her trial had come upon her, as she expected it would come, when her husband's uncle had entered her house, an hour ago, and she must prepare herself for its endurance.

What a flashing of thought there was through her brain, as the significance of the words developed themselves to her sense. The Past, the Present, and the Future, in vivid limning held up, in instant, but deep-striking impression, their pictured story for

her heart-reading : The Past that had gone beyond recall ; the Present, here, with its happiness ; and, the Future, coming, all dark and doubtful, and danger-menacing to her.

The picture reversed itself again. She saw what might have been for her, if but her past—the gone-away—had been different. She saw, in instant, yet, all bright distinctness, the still smiling and happy present, how much happier without the doubt and fear, in which she had love, and hope, and joy ; the future that would have been equally brightened, smiling and happy, as it passed away into the long-marching years.

All these and crowding others, flashed through her mind, while the danger that the menacing Future held forth aroused her and awakened her to its pressing threatenings.

A moment's pause ere she raised her head ; her large eyes fixed, flamingly bright, upon his face, while upon her own lay a deep-dyeing blush. Excited she doubtless was, for her mouth trembled and her breath came hurriedly between the parted lips, but nothing born of fierceness or anger overlaid the hunted expression ; there was no passion or defiance in the tone in which she spoke—

"And have you come merely to say this to me, Mr. Horton, merely to say this to me, or are you here to bring discord and misery between me and the husband who loves me ; who has now none other to love but his wife ? Are you here to end, if you can, the little happiness that is left to him, his loving belief and his trust in me ? If so, Mr. Horton, you might well spare him. Say what you will to me, I shall endure patiently all you may wish to say, but spare Reggie this last blow !"

"You mistake me, Emily, I am here for a better purpose, I hope," replied Mr. Horton, calmly and kindly. "Not here to destroy Reggie's happiness, but, if possible, to confirm it, and, if you will allow me, your own, also.

"But, Emily," he continued, after a moment's pause, "this

all rests with you ; rests upon yourself, alone, this morning."

"Rests with me, Mr. Horton ! I do not understand you. What rests with me ? Reggie's happiness ? Poor fellow ! He has little other left him than his true love for his wife. That I will retain, if I can retain it," she replied, her voice growing firmer with each of these words she spoke.

"Emily," returned Mr. Horton, "have I not told you that all is known to us, now ; all is known of the means employed against my niece and her betrothed ; all, even to the proof against her who so cruelly used those means.

"I do not come to you to insult or injure, but rather to bring peace and restoration ; I bring forgiveness from those whom you have injured ; forgiveness, forgetfulness, and silence as to the past, if you will have them. You can restore a son to his parents in full reconciliation, you can become as a daughter to them ; and, Emily, you can save yourself.

"Of all who know these past events—and, they are few who know them—Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt, Ethel, Mr. Vance, your sister Ada, and myself, being all to whom silence has not been kept ; not one—not one who will not rejoice that you come back to us again ; not one who bears malice towards you, not one who would not rather forgive and forget. Emily, you have committed a great crime, it is your duty to make atonement."

"What am I to say ? What am I to do ?" exclaimed Emily, bowing her head into her hands, and the bitter sobs told of the struggle within her.

She knew what was expected of her now—the little, the easy ending for her heavy sin.

But was it so easy ?

Was it not hard—very hard—for her, to say the words ?

To wash away in entirety the old leaven of the years gone by, to replace entirely the old thoughts, motives and desires by those of a new life ; to effect the sweeping change of her

whole mental being may not be done at a moment's impulse. It was not so easy.

It was hard upon her, very hard. She felt now all the bitterness ; she deeply realized now—as she was, with her new life upon her—the dire rewardings of her sin.

“Emily, your husband loves you ; loves you, trusts you, and is happy in his love. His future life lies in great measure in your hands ; does he not deserve all from you ?

“I have found, also, my dear,” he continued, “that you have tried to be a good wife to him, when it was hardly expected of you that you should have been ; that you *have* been a good wife to him, and I have discovered, Emily, that there has come to you, the great good to love your husband, as he loves you—a very great good—why do you not make it the turning-point of your life? Save yourself, Emily, save yourself, now, at once, in this very time.

“I know that you did not love your husband, at the first,” he resumed, as he rose from his seat, and, standing over her, gently laid his hand upon her bowed head, and gently touched the wavy masses of her bright hair. “I know you did not love him then, for I knew, my dear, the reasons that induced you to marry him. Yet it has come to you love him. Who sent that love to your heart ? Why was the love sent to your heart ? Why do you refuse His proffered mercy ?”

“I do love him ! I love him with my whole heart !” exclaimed Emily, springing up to her feet from her bowed-down attitude of shame and sorrow, but with tearful averted face, and in a trembling voice, “I have tried to be as good a wife to him as was possible for me to be, so that I might keep his young, kind, all-true love, and I have come to love him. For his sake I would do all. What can I say ? What can I do ?

“Mr. Horton, I am Reggie's wife, the wife of his love ; unworthy, oh ! how unworthy, but not unworthy in that I have tried, since I am his wife, and through him I am saved.

"I am Reggie's wife," she continued, "and being that, I cannot say the words which you expect me to say.

"But, on my knees, I ask God to forgive me my sin!"

* * * * *

And Emily's prayer ascended to Him who hears.

* * * * *

Mr. Horton turned away to the window, and looked out over the wide waters, upon which the sun's rays glanced in golden flashings; out upon the beautiful world in its brightness, and its ever fresh delighting, moving on with its living creatures all safely under the Great Merciful Hand; and in his sight it was then very beautiful, although a tear stood in his eye.

For a few minutes, he stood thinking of all that had passed in the last, few short minutes, thinking of what then passed through the soul of that one of God's creatures, upon whose head the Great Merciful Hand had been laid, and he did not regret that he had come to see Emily Mordaunt.

Then he approached and stood over the kneeling figure, bowed down over the chair, trembling, sobbing, entranced, enthralled under her great emotion; no longer in despair, or fear, or agony, for the Great presence she had entered was around her, and in healing mercy she knew that her sin was forgiven her, according to His everlasting promise. Mr. Horton took her hand, gently raising her up, and said—

"Emily, my dear, you must not make yourself ill. Calm yourself down in the knowledge of the great good that, to-day, has come to you. God has forgiven you, Emily, as we can but know, and when He forgives, shall man's poor pardonings be withheld?"

As he tenderly placed her again on her chair, holding still the nervously clenching fingers, which told how terrible had been her trial, he continued—

"You have saved yourself, Emily. You have made yourself the worthy wife of the husband you love; you have given back

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their son to a father and mother, you have given them, also, a daughter—yourself, a daughter to be loved and cherished. All is forgiven and forgotten, Emily, and now will you and your husband go back with me to Lake Mordaunt? Here are my credentials,” and he handed her a note from his pocket-book.

“Not yet! Not yet! I could not yet, Mr. Horton! I could not yet look into the faces of those who—in return for the deep injuries I inflicted upon them—have been so generous and so noble to me. In a little time I will meet them, but not yet,” she answered, tremulously.

“Well, do just as you please, my dear,” answered Mr. Horton. “I shall not press you. Perhaps you do right to defer your visit for a space. You might find it too hard yet.”

* * * * *

“Will you tell Reggie when he returns, Mr. Horton, or shall I?” she said, after a silence of some duration. “He must be told, yet it would be very dreadful to me to have to tell him.”

“Tell Reggie what? What should be so dreadful?” was the enquiry in reply.

“To tell him of that which has passed to-day.”

“Neither shall tell him. He is not to be told; he must never be told. It is all driven back into the past and forgotten. His wife has become really his wife now; let him keep his first faith and trust in her. He is not to be told, Emily.”

“Yet I had commenced to tell him this very morning, when you knocked at the door, Mr. Horton. If I could tell him then, why should I not now?” answered Emily.

“My arrival was opportune, it appears. No, Emily, he is not to be told. If he was to have been told he would have known before this day. That is all past now. Let us talk of something else. Tell me of your plans, Emily. What does Reggie intend to do. He cannot live on, as he is living now, in idleness.”

“We shall leave this place very soon. Mr. Mordaunt wishes

Reggie to return to college to pursue the study of a profession. He has been very generous, also, for he has offered Reggie an additional thousand dollars a year to enable him to do so," replied Emily.

"Well! I am glad of that; very glad. You are right to go. Mordaunt *is* generous about it, too; a good father deserves a good son. I hope that Reggie will now show that he appreciates the fact by becoming a good son."

"I am sure that he will, Mr. Horton. It shall not be my fault if he does not," she replied earnestly.

"I will undertake to tell Reggie all that is necessary concerning Vance and Ethel; the former must be put right in his eyes. You may trust me in the matter, Emily, as your friend, which I really now am.

"*You* can tell Reggie for me, though," he continued, "that he will find every year an extra thousand to his credit as a present from his old uncle to him and to you, also, my dear girl. Now I think I will go out for a walk. I shall not be away long, and I should wish to find a bright face when I come in. You have struck upon the right road to-day, Emily. Keep to it always."

* * * * *

At dinner that day, as Reggie, looking in the sweet face of his fair young wife, very quiet and a little sad still, but with its anxious lines of care dispersed, and a new soft beauty shining in its place, lifted up his boisterous young voice and said—

"What have you been saying to Emily this morning, uncle, that she has made herself look so pretty? Have you been paying compliments and flattering her vanity? All said and done, I do not think I have any cause to regret having ran away with her from Ten Lakes that summer's day two months ago."

"No! Nor do I think she has. It was really a happy day for her," replied Mr. Horton.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN M. P. IN PROSPECTU—HOPE!

When Edwin Vance returned from his visit to the uncle of his Ethel, enlisting him into his cause, as general regenerator and the righter of his wrongs, he settled himself down to the duties of his profession with the firm determination to abide by Mr. Horton's condition of non-interference in the delicate affairs which he had entrusted to the skillful hands of that gentleman, and to quietly await for the hoped for result which was to be achieved.

But even a short fortnight of this waiting had proved to be a very severe trial to his patience.

To give his promise of non-interference had been sufficiently easy, but to keep it intact as the slow days wore on he began to find increasingly difficult.

He had not received a line or heard a word from Mr. Horton during the time, from Lake Mordaunt or Ten Lakes either, nor had he any reason, according to the arrangement, to expect a word or a line; yet still he worried and fretted, while the time seemed unendurably long to him.

He assiduously occupied himself with his professional duties; he amused himself with watching the fast progressing courtship of Mr. Erastus Gooch; he endeavoured to keep himself contented and satisfied; to think of the troubles of his love as little as he possibly could; to pass away time as quickly as it could be passed; but yet it moved slowly and more slowly as day succeeded day.

"Anything to end this wearying suspense," he thought. "Why cannot Horton write? A fortnight—an age—without a word.

He has been mistaken, I rather suspect, as to the very easy finding, he promised, of the two letters on which so much seems to depend, or some other difficulties must have arisen. How terrible it is that when trouble once comes home to a man it is so very hard to oust again the unwelcome guest.

"How I would like to run up to Ten Lakes and Lake Mordaunt to see for myself how affairs progress.

"How I would like it; but yet, I suppose, I must abide by the rather inconsiderate promise I made to Horton. Yet I can endure this harrassing delay but little longer. I must have a change of some kind from this uneasy restlessness that consumes me or I shall go demented.

"The very thing! I'll run down to Hopetown for a thorough looking into the affairs of that new venture of mine. That shall pass away three or four days for me, and if, when I return, there should still be nothing from Horton, I shall most decidedly go and look after him in addition.

"Yes! I will take this trip down to Hopetown for a change and a relief in the first place, and I must look closely into that matter as well, for it will not do to leave everything blindly to Sidney, the more especially as the wise ones hint that there are distant but intelligible indications of approaching calamity to the commercial world, which if not immediate, perhaps, is not the less certain to come in the end, and if their prophecy be worth listening to it would necessitate preparations for the taking in of sail in readiness for the storm.

"I'll go down to-night to see what Sidney is doing, and have a general overhauling."

Acting upon this determination he departed the same night for Hopetown, in which place he spent the next three days in a close examination of the affairs of the great mills in which he had become interested.

He found Sidney Wolverton at his post actively engaged "up to the ears," he said, in business, for orders were brisk, large and

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plentiful, and the mills were running night and day to their full capacity.

And certainly the establishment and all around it looked prosperous and stirring, full of business life and vitality, which impressed Vance, pleased and interested him.

Wolverton, no longer crippled for means or with doubtful credit, had taken new interest in the concern and had infused new life and energy into its management by his presence and example, and had been enabled to put things on to the very brisk footing which he liked best to see, so that when Edwin Vance paid his visit the great factory at Hopetown presented a busy and thriving aspect.

"Wolverton certainly must be a good business man for all here gives evidence of it, at any rate," he thought, as he noticed the good order and condition of the buildings, plant and machinery; the busy hum of industry, the crowds of workmen and the systematic management which appeared to prevail in each department of the works.

The close examination of the books of account into which he entered did not tend either to lessen his satisfaction. All appeared to be as it should be, and his rigid search but confirmed the declaration of Sidney in Toronto concerning the lightness of the liabilities. That the concern was in a prosperous condition appeared evident, and the hard day's work spent on the books but brought the same conclusion more strongly home.

He noticed, however, that instead of taking in sail, Wolverton had spread out more to the wind, was increasing the scope of the business, had been purchasing heavily of late, and had put the works to their full capacity.

This Sidney explained by the statement that business was brisk, orders large and numerous, and if-filled altogether from their finished stock would soon produce them empty warehouses.

Vance was satisfied to give a few cautions to his friend, and said nothing more upon the subject.

Another point which had attracted his attention was that the books showed that at the time Sidney had asked for his assistance during the past summer he must have had a considerably larger command of means than he had acknowledged, for there was evidence that payments to a very heavy amount had then been made.

To Vance this seemed strange, and for an instant his mind reverted to the note for thirty-five thousand dollars which he had had to meet, but the idea was as quickly dismissed from his mind as he remembered Hatchitfess's receipt which so plainly proved the innocence of his friend.

"If then," he thought, "Sidney had at that time so much more money than he acknowledged to have had, it is all the better for me, seeing he has invested it here, and my position with regard to the property is so much the safer."

Edwin Vance returned to Toronto satisfied sufficiently with his visit to Hopetown, by no means regretting his adventure therein, and looking forward to it as a source of increased riches for his partner and for himself.

Another source of gratification had come to him during his visit, one, too, of a wholly unexpected nature, and with which his thoughts on his journey home had been pleasantly occupied.

He had been surprised, on the last evening of his stay, by a visit from several gentlemen of Hopetown and the adjoining county, who, when they had congratulated him as a new proprietor among them, and themselves upon the fact of his becoming so, had proceeded to invite him to consider the propriety of standing for their county in the general election for the Dominion, which present events would indicate as being of not distant date.

The county, they had represented to him, to be strongly Con-

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servative, but likely to suffer to some extent from the influence of the unfortunate Pacific Railway scandal, and it became necessary that their candidate, to ensure success, should be *par excellence* a strong man, unblemished as to character, above suspicion, and above all in a position that no personal grounds of dislike could be brought against him. He, being a new comer among them, could hardly be supposed to be thus affected, while he was relieved from the charge of being a stranger whose interests lay elsewhere by his connection with and stake in the county.

They had concluded with a strongly-worded desire that he should come forward as the representative of the party, and assured him that they were not unauthorized in their invitation, as they had been informally delegated by the county organizations.

He expressed his gratification at the honor they had thus conferred upon him, and had promised acceptance of their invitation if the contest should arise, or if he found there should be a probability of success.

He therefore departed for Toronto in a pleasant enough frame of mind, satisfied as to the prospects of his new investment, looking forward with sanguine pleasure to his probable future seat in Parliament, a very attractive idea to one of his temperament and intellectual cast of mind, for, devoid of selfish or purely party ends, he could, as he fondly imagined, from that high standpoint best serve the interests of his country and his fellow citizens.

But these subjects, interesting though they were to him, did not exclude all others from his thoughts or even hold the prominent position in his mind.

He had one greater, more engrossing idea—Ethel Mordaunt and the restoration of his engagement.

When at last the wakeful influences of the insomnious Pullman car were counteracted by his fatigue, his last conscious idea

was the wonder if he should receive a letter from Mr. Horton in the morning.

* * * * *

"And so, my dear Edwin, you have found your visit to your new property at Hopetown as satisfactory as you could wish," said Mrs. Vance to her son as they were seated at breakfast together the morning of his arrival home.

"Very satisfactory—very satisfactory indeed, my dear mother. I find I have no occasion to regret my investment there, so far as anything appears at present. The prospects of success are even better than I had anticipated," he replied, cheerfully.

"I am very glad to hear you say so, for I must confess that I have felt anxious. Manufacturing is an unknown field to you, Edwin," said his mother.

"Well! Perhaps it is so. But in order to save myself from heavy loss I was compelled to enter into the partnership, and I am only too well pleased that things have so bright an appearance with regard to it," he answered. "But, my dear mother, how would you like the prospect of seeing your son an M. P. I have been invited to accept a nomination for that county."

"Indeed, Edwin. You astonish me; but of that I am very glad. I sincerely hope you will succeed in obtaining your seat. Are you not almost a stranger to them there, though?"

"Well! that they seemed to consider an advantage, and I have no reason to object to the idea. I shall certainly run the county when the time comes," said Edwin.

"My dear boy, you deserve success. How proud I shall be to write to you at Ottawa and add the two magic letters to your name," his mother answered, kissing him affectionately. "But, Edwin, I have some news to tell you in my turn. What will you think of it? Agnes Seaforth is engaged to be married."

"Agnes Seaforth engaged! Well! that is news, mother," he echoed. "Although it was to be expected, is it not a trifle

soon, though? Their courtship has not certainly been very protracted. Mr. Gooch, I suppose, is the happy man."

"Yes! Mr. Gooch is the happy man. Their engagement comes upon us a little earlier than I expected, but Agnes has her own reasons for acceptance, I suppose, and I know that she likes him," said Mrs. Vance.

"I could see that she did not dislike him, at all events," said Edwin, laughing.

"By the way, Edwin, she wishes to see you on the first opportunity that you can make. The old story, I suppose. The proud spirit that will not brook a thought that does not carry independence."

"I suppose so. I shall call upon her this evening as she wishes me to do so, but she will find her arguments to no purpose in the old story. And now I must be off. Good morning, mother. There are not any letters for me here, you say?"

"No, Edwin. None came to the house, and I did not send down to your chambers. Good bye!"

But Edwin found at last a long-desired letter awaiting him among the collection of his few days of absence. It is very certain that it was the first selected for perusal.

"At last," he said, as he tore it open.

"LAKE MORDAUNT, Dec. 13th, 1873.

"MY DEAR VANCE,—

"Meet me at Hopetown on Tuesday next. I wish to see you.

"You may prepare for a few days of absence from home.

"Perhaps you may find—but I shall say nothing until we meet.

"I found the letters just as I expected, within five minutes, too, of my arrival at the Lake. You could not guess, though you tried until we meet.

"Your trip into New York was not lost.

"Be at Hopetown on Tuesday.

"Your affect. friend,

"EDWARD J. HORTON."

"Hopetown on Tuesday! Why at Hopetown? It surely must be Cascades that he means. But no! he never makes mistakes. 'Perhaps you may find.'

"How aggravating he is, to be sure. Could he not have told me something. How provoking and how inconsiderate. Well! so the letters are found, that is one good thing. 'Trip into New York not lost.' What can he mean by that but all is right again? I hope so—I hope so. How glad, how happy I should be if I but knew that. If he had but given me one little assurance.

"Saturday, Sunday, Monday—three mortal days to wait. How shall I ever get through all their long hours. Three drawn out tedious days of suspense.

"Yes! but with hope to brighten them. Hope shall brighten them if it cannot make their long hours fly faster.

"Light at last, I trust, I fondly trust," he continued. "After all these dreadful months. It must be so. The happy, longed-for hour has arrived at last.

"Horton would not mock me with delusive hopes. Had it been aught else than the sweet hour of renewal for our love, he would have written plainly and to the point.

"Oh! Ethel, Ethel; have you come back to me again? my loved—my betrothed."

A dozen times he read over the letter, as if to extract from its wording—some turn of its few sentences—a firmer assurance of his ardent hopes.

The letter gave him hope, to be sure, but it did not give him the assurance.

The long drawn out and weary hours! how would they not spin out their lingering space for him?

A day, another and another. An age to his restless longings, his anxious suspense, his unknowing, unsatisfied, miserable disquietude.

"Let me get to work," he said, "and finish one of the three protracting torments as unthinkingly as I may."

And, very wisely for Mr. Edwin Vance, he went to his work, and found in that sufficient to absolutely occupy the day for him. Expecting it to be long and tedious, he found that labour had winged it into the desired shortness, and with surprise to himself he noted the early darkness falling upon the scene of his duties

"One day gone, at any rate," he said to himself as he walked quickly homewards. "This evening I must devote to Agnes Seaforth's affairs, whatever they may be."

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIGHT AT LAST.

"I wish you joy, Agnes," said Mr. Vance, taking Miss Seaforth's hand as he was ushered into the little drawing-room of her little house, where, in addition to Miss Springer, he found Mr. Gooch, the would-be "benedict," before him.

"I wish you joy, Agnes, with all my heart, and hope you will be always happy," he continued. "You the same, Mr. Gooch, faithful cavalier, who, I verily believe, never leaves his fair lady's side for a single instant. Wish you joy, Miss Springer, on the happy prospect of getting rid of your troublesome niece." And Edwin proceeded to make himself comfortable at the side of the latter personage when he had finished his salutations.

"I say, though, Goochy," he resumed shortly, "you have not lost much time in bringing affairs to a successful termination. Have you a love philter? Come, tell me your secret."

Thus addressed, irreverently, the newly-engaged laughed in the joy of his heart, as, with a mischievous little glance at his fair *fiancée*, he replied—

"The more hurry the *more* speed, Mr. Vance. 'Never put off proposing when it's in the day's disposing.' These are the

secrets," and he bestowed his huge frame as near to his betrothed as he in conscience could do.

"Capital idea, don't you think so, Agnes?" exclaimed Edwin, gleefully, for the day's good news had raised his spirits to the point in which others' affairs than his own could again be of interest.

"I think nothing at all concerning the matter, Mr. Vance, and, allow me to add, I would consider myself very much obliged if you would *say* nothing concerning it, either," answered Agnes, in a tone so marked that there could be no mistaking her dislike of the subject.

While, to Edwin's open delight, Mr. Gooch came in for some spirited little asperities on his want of propriety, to which he listened, as in duty bound, with adoring deprecation and humble protestations of improvement for the future.

"Doth not your too prophetic soul already shudder at prospect of the days to come?" enquired Edwin, mischievously, of the beleagured benedict upon the ending of his dire besiegement.

"Hold your tongue, can't you, Mr. Vance? Do you wish to bring me further disgrace? Be quiet and talk reasonably," he replied, with a twinkle of his good-humored blue eyes.

"Well, Agnes, I shall have to limit my conversation to business, it appears. What may you require of me to-night? You sent for me, I believe. The drawing up of the marriage settlements is the only possible business you can have to transact with a lawyer. If so, I'm all ready."

"No! it is not, Mr. Vance. There are no marriage settlements to draw up. What is the matter with you this evening that you persist in making yourself so disagreeable?" replied Agnes.

"I had some good news to-day, Agnes; consequently I can be happy to see others happy," he said, rubbing his hands together in his pleasure.

"Good news ! then it must come from Ethel Mordaunt. I am very glad for your sake—very glad that your unhappinesses are over, and I forgive you for all your rudeness to me just now. The privileged words of a friend, you know," she added kindly, as she congratulated him.

"Yes ! Vance, I am very glad for your sake. I have really felt quite guilty in my own happiness while you were in trouble," said Mr. Gooch, warmly.

"All over now, or soon shall be, I hope and believe. But, Agnes, what do you require me to do for you to-night ? Tell me that I may do it and take myself off out of the way," replied Mr. Vance.

"You are not in the way, Mr. Vance," she replied with a warning look. "The matter concerning which I wished to see you is this annuity, which, contrary to my wishes, yet so generously, you have purchased for me. You must take it back, as I ——"

"Yes ! Mr. Vance, interrupted Mr. Gooch, rising and advancing towards him. "Miss Seaforth has told me of all the circumstances connected with that affair, so honorable to your late father and to yourself, and she wishes, in which I heartily concur with her, that the annuity be transferred back to you. Agnes cannot accept it, and, excuse me for saying, I should prefer also that she did not"

"No business of yours, Mr. Gooch ; the annuity belongs to Agnes, and can never be yours," replied Edwin, with a laugh.

"Agnes," he continued, "you know just as well as I know that I have nothing to do with this affair. It was my father's not mine. Good evening, Agnes ! Good evening, Mr. Gooch ! I'm off. I did not come here to talk nonsense," and Edwin moved off as if to leave the room.

"Stay, Mr. Vance, I beg of you," exclaimed Agnes, laying her hand detainingly upon his arm. "I am serious in this, that I cannot accept this money. I have not done so since I wrote

you at Lake Mordaunt, and I never shall. Do not think, I pray, that I am ungrateful for your noble generosity to a ——”

“No generosity at all about it, Agnes,” interrupted Edwin, hastily. “My father left you what he considered was fairly yours. I have nothing to do with it. It is yours, not mine, and I shall not have it. No use for us to speak further about it. Let us have some music in place of your disagreeables, or I shall go away.”

“Hear me, dear Mr. Vance,” exclaimed Agnes, appealingly. “You must know by this time my determination in this matter, for I have told you so often. In any event I shall cause the annuity to be transferred back to you to-morrow.”

“You cannot do it, Agnes, for I shall not accept. I shall not sign; you cannot make me sign. You will have to keep it, I fear,” replied Edwin, laughing at her seriousness.

“But we shall not want it, Mr. Vance, we shall have enough of our own,” said Mr. Gooch, determinedly shoving in his great oar.

“Very likely, Mr. Gooch, in fact I know very well you shall not want it; but suppose, for argument’s sake now, that you were some day to become again ‘transported with joy,’ as you were on the celebrated evening that we met in the college grounds and make some bad speculation or other entailing the loss of your overflowing wealth, would not Agnes’ little trifle come in very well for her?” and again Edwin laughed.

“A very far-fetched supposition, Mr. Vance. Very little likelihood of its occurrence. I am highly flattered, also. No fear of that now,” responded Mr. Gooch, in mock indignation.

“Well! I do not think you require much reforming, and I am very sure that your Agnes here will keep you in order. You need not blush, Agnes, you are engaged you know. Yet still there are such things as losses in the best regulated households,” answered Edwin.

“Still, Mr. Vance, the fact remains that I shall never consent

to accept this money upon any terms. I will starve first. If you do not cancel the arrangement the money shall be left untouched to accumulate for you," said Agnes, erect, and with determination.

"For yourself, Agnes, not for me," he replied.

"Mr. Gooch," continued Edwin, with a vexed laugh. "It is my firm opinion that you have to be very thankful to this annuity that you both make so much fuss over; had it not been Agnes' ardent desire to get rid of it, you might not have found your wooing come so quickly to its desired attainment, notwithstanding your mutilated proverbs either. Be sensible now and take a lawyer's advice, don't meddle with that which you cannot help. Leave well alone."

"Well, it is Agnes' affair, not mine," responded Mr. Gooch. "You are both pretty obstinate, and I shall have nothing more to say."

Mr. Gooch, as he said this, turned away to converse with Miss Springer, determinately, as if done with the subject.

"Did you really mean the words which you said just now, Mr. Vance?" said Agnes, with blazing face. "That I, to get rid of this hateful money, had listened too soon to—to—to——"

"No! I did not, Agnes. A mere joke," interrupted Edwin. "Do you think after all these years of our friendship that I do not know the high spirit of Agnes Seaforth. And I know, too, your reason, my dear girl. You—well, we will say—like Mr. Gooch, and he loves you. You will be very happy, and I congratulate you, Agnes. You have made a good choice; he is good; he is honest and a gentleman, even if he is not so clever as his wife-to-be is."

Edwin carefully sank his voice at the latter part of his sentence, but Agnes turned away with a smile, and the conversation became general.

* * * * *

But the interminable hours that intervened for Mr. Vance between him and his desired Tuesday passed away one by one as do all our hours.

Their tardiness or their swiftness, so purely imaginative, yet so very real, as we look forward to a goal that seems distant to us or near, is but apparent tardiness or swiftness endowed to them by our thoughts. The hours march on the same, unchanging, unalterable.

But it is very probable that his hours were very tardy to Edwin—very tardy, and his goal very far off to his view.

But the days passed on, and it came close to him at last.

As the rushing express train, thundering eastward, passed station after station in the early morning after its long, dark night journey, and Hopetown was no longer distant, his mind recognizing how close he was coming to his fate, became unmistakably anxious and excited.

"Hopetown is indeed the city of my hope to-day," he said to himself, as, his toilet thus early completed, he looked out from the window of his Pullman car upon the fleeing landscape, all cold and desolate in the dim grey morning light. "I awake to a morning whose dawn may be very bright for me. But what if my hope proves but delusive again; but bitter disappointment and weary delay that I go to meet?"

"Can I longer endure such? Can I bear again the crushing down of my charmed castle in the air?"

"Yes! bitter as the blow may be I must bear it. I will bear it, for though years may pass in this anxious misery, I am determined that I will work my way to my own again, and Ethel is my own—my very own. She plighted herself to me; she confirmed again her troth when she held the right to take it back from me at the time I fell from my promised word that I had given her. She is mine, for I have not forfeited my right.

"If I must, I will spend my life in the attempt to regain the

love she owes me, and in that endeavour I shall but do as I ought to do.

"But no! There is hope for me—my journey to Hopetown I accept as a happy augury. I go to meet the confirmation of my hope.

"Had Horton required my presence upon any mere business affair, or even some newly arisen obstacle in the way, he would have written more plainly. The very dubiety which his letter conveys is strength to my hope.

"Oh! Ethel, Ethel. I am tired of waiting; my undeserved punishment has fallen heavily upon me. May this be its last delay.

"Oh! my darling, what would I not do, what would I not give to see once again your hand outstretched to me in the old confidence; to see again the trusting smile upon your face, the tender light in your eye? Shall I ever reach that happiness? Shall that day ever dawn for me?"

The loud whistle of the great locomotive aroused him from his reveries; the shrill scream of the steam brake and the sudden relaxation of the speed of the huge night express told him that he had at length reached his destination.

In another second he stood upon the station platform at Hopetown amid the hurrying crowd who scrambled off or bustled on to the waiting train, which, impatient to rush onwards again over its long drawn out iron road, whistled and screamed in the chill morning air. In an instant more it was gone; the hurrying crowd dispersed, and Edwin Vance found himself confronted by his friend Sidney Wolverton.

"From whence did you spring down, Sidney, at this untimely hour? I did not notice you on the train," he exclaimed in surprise.

"Very likely, Vance, seeing that I was not on board, and was quietly awaiting your arrival here," answered Sidney, as they shook hands.

"You awaiting me, Sidney. Why how did you know that I was to come? It was Mr. Horton I had expected to meet," said Edwin, his surprise unlessened, but his bright hopes commencing to fade way.

"Yes! so I suppose, but he went away last night," replied his friend, looking into his face with an amused smile upon his own.

"Gone away! Gone away! did you say? Impossible. I have an appointment to meet him here to-day," exclaimed Edwin, blankly, with down-cast expression and despair written upon his features.

"Well, Vance, I'll grant the impossibility, nevertheless, he went away last night. He left, however, a note for you, in explanation, I suppose," answered Sidney, with provoking coolness and a mischievous twinkle in his eye as he proceeded with methodical slowness to produce his pocket-book, and from it the missive of which he spoke.

"Quick, Sidney, give it me. Don't be all day getting that thing opened."

Edwin, when he got it into his hand, tore open the envelope with nervous haste.

"HOPETOWN, December 21st, 1873.

"DEAR VANCE,—

"Follow me to Lake Mordaunt as fast as you like.

"I have finished here all I wished to finish, and cannot be bothered waiting until to-morrow for you.

"I have reorganized your precious partner upon a sounder basis.

"Perhaps you may see—but I am too tired to write more, and you will know all when you arrive, which, I suppose, will be to-morrow evening.

"Yours affect.,

"EDWARD J. HORTON."

Vance was so angered with what he considered Mr. Horton's trifling that he had to read this note over two or three times before he could gather its meanings at all.

That he was to go to Lake Mordaunt he at once saw, and that was happiness, for he would be near, at any rate—he might see even—her whom he had so faithfully loved, but he did not, at the first, pick much further comfort from the vexatious little epistle which had thus so delayed his knowledge.

“I say, Vance,” said Sidney, “the train for Cascades does not start for an hour to come. Had you not better come over to the hotel for some breakfast? Come, don’t look so discouraged. You’ll be at the Lake before night, and that is better, certainly, than meeting a sour old Yankee Senator here.”

“All right, Sidney, but how do you know that I am going to the Lake?” answered Vance, recovering himself from the disappointment he at first experienced in the brighter hopes of his new destination. “What was it, too, that induced Mr. Horton to leave without fulfilling his appointment?” continued Edwin, as he picked up his valise, and walked on with his friend.

“Oh! he told me that you would only be too glad to follow him, but his reasons for leaving are unknown to me. He hurried through his examinations of the mills and the books as quickly as possible that he might get away, and a precious ‘wiggling’ he gave me, too, before he left. I know that I, at any rate, was very glad to get rid of him,” replied Sidney, with a laugh. A laugh, however, which was rather forced, and he looked as if the ‘wiggling’ of which he had spoken had not been altogether pleasant.

“He went over the mills and the books, did he?” said Edwin, in some surprise. “Then he did not send for me to come here for anything concerning them, it would appear?”

“No, I imagine not. I thought, though, that you had sent him upon your part. He told me when he had finished, that he found matters better than he had expected, in a tone of condescension, too, as if he had been the proprietor, and I his book-keeper,” answered Sidney.

"Then, what in the world did he appoint me to meet him here for? I cannot understand," in vexation, replied Edwin.

"Oh! I imagine there is a surprise in store for you at the Lake, Vance. I cannot say anything further, though," laughed Sidney, as they entered the hotel.

"He ordered me peremptorily, to deliver the note to you without fail, on the station, when you arrived. He is a remarkably cool personage, I can tell you," he continued.

"And for what high crimes did you receive the blowing up, Sidney?" asked Edwin, when they had entered a sitting-room and ordered breakfast. "Anything about the mills?"

"No, Edwin! a lecture upon—upon—concerning my moral character. He went in for my reformation," was the reply given, too rather seriously.

"Well, has he succeeded?" asked Edwin, with a smile.

"I do not know. If I can do so, I shall try to profit by his advice. I have promised some things which he asked me to promise; in fact, he made me promise. Had we not better speak of something else until breakfast is ready?"

"Sidney," asked Edwin again, after a pause, "did he say anything to you relative to my—my—my—to my connection with Miss Mordaunt? I would not ask you were it not that I am so anxious."

"I can see that you are anxious, Vance," replied Sidney, with a smile. "Yes, he did speak of the affair; but, I am unable to tell you anything, I promised him. You have, however, no occasion to look so down-in-the-mouth, as you do at present, that I can say."

"You think so, Sidney, really, do you think so? How awful is this suspense to me. How I wish I were now at Lake Mordaunt," said Edwin, with a sigh.

"Well, you will be there by dark, and then you will know all. Let us go down to breakfast. You have not much time to spare."

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How slowly seemed to move the train that bore him on his way to Cascades. How slowly it seemed to force its unwilling way into the interior.

How numerous all the useless little stations at which to stop, and how vexatious the delay that was made at them. How slowly ran the train for his feverish haste ; how long the minutes spun themselves out ; how wearisome the slow dragging on of the hours.

And yet his train seemed to travel at very fair speed for a branch road. His fellow passengers did not seem to find their journey so very tedious, for they laughed, chatted and enjoyed themselves. Their four hours of travel to them, was a pleasure trip, if it was not to impatient Edwin Vance.

It was only he who, every five minutes, took out his watch with useless perseverance and automatic nervousness to consult its slow-moving hands. It was only he who, each five minutes, sprang uneasily from his seat, as the train slacked-up deliberately at each way-station, and strode up and down impatiently, until it moved on again.

But the five minutes foiled the gone five minutes in regular unending succession, as usual. Time runs on, steadily, surely, unceasingly, while we—in our haste for the future, always in our eyes so bright—waste it. The minutes roll themselves into hours all certainly, and—no matter how slow they may seem to us, future-aspiring, who would fain anticipate their distant bringings—they weave on, unchanging, their ceaseless web.

The train duly reached Cascades, on time, too, though, to Vance's impatience, it was hours behind. He, seizing his valise, jumped down to the platform, almost before the train had reached it, and hurried over to the hotel, as fast as he could move without absolutely running for it.

As he entered and rushed into the office to order a team, a well-remembered voice saluted his ears.

"Arrah ! now, Mishter Vance, and is it forgittin' yer frinds ye are, this day, in yer hashte. I cuddent have belaved it av yer ; but it's plazed I am till see ye wance again, sorr, so it is. And it's waiting I am till dhroive ye up till the Lake."

Mr. Barney Conley, as he uttered the words, held forth his right hand, in all the conscious dignity that the stove-pipe hat, the long, black coat, stiff collar and uncomfortably compressed windpipe thereby, could confer upon a man.

"Barney, it is you, then. I am delighted to see you, too," said Edwin, the very sight of the familiar face of the old Irishman, bringing back to him again the bright days between which and his present hour had been a blank so horrible. "How are you, my old friend ? But have you really come to drive me up, Barney?" he continued.

"Faix ! I have thin, and it's proud I am av the pleasure. The ould Yankee Ginerall sint me down afther ye. It's getting out the baste I'll be at wance," replied Barney.

"Barney," insinuated Edwin, "would you not like to go and drink my health, with success to my trip to Lake Mordaunt?" and Edwin, in utter contravention of temperance principles, slipped a bank-note into Barney's hand, which caused that individual to skip for joy, when he afterwards broke it in the bar.

"Begorra ! Mishter Vance, is it dhrink yer health, I will ? Yis, sorr, and some wan else's health, too, I'm thinkin', and botheration till thim that kem betune the two av yez. I'm thinkin' as how ye'll find yer vishit an agrable wan this time, sorr," and Barney proceeded to order out his horses.

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The early darkness had fallen over the raw, cold December evening, as Edwin Vance and Barney drove around the head of the well-remembered little lake, and dashed up the road towards the house, whose lights—warm, bright, comfortable, welcoming and hospitable-looking—had come into view.

But the warming aspect of the lights did not fall so warmly upon Edwin's eyes, as he had expected they would have done. His heart that had beat so high with his hope that day, sank a little in the immediate prospect of the unknown—though desired—that lay so directly before him.

In one short minute further, would not the decision, the fixed destiny of his life, to which he was alone unknowing, be made known to him. On the momentary edge he stood and feared. Life-long happiness, or life-long misery, as it seemed to him, to be revealed in one short minute's space.

"Is it to be as I hope, I wonder? Does a welcome await my coming, or are my steps still to be dogged with wretchedness?"

There was no time, however, for his fears, no time for his anxious forebodings.

Barney dashed up to the door, drew up his animals with a jerk, and Edwin Vance stood again on the well-known verandah at Lake Mordaunt.

Ere he had time to ring the bell, or even recall his scattered thoughts from dire confusion, the door opened, and Mr. Mordaunt stood before him.

"How do you do, Edwin?" he said, holding out his hand. "We have been expecting you. Come in. I am very glad to meet you again as we meet to-day."

"Oh! you are there, are you, Edwin?" said Mr. Horton, as he entered the hall. "I thought you would find your way up. How did you enjoy your visit to Hopetown?"

"I received your vexatious note, and came, as you see, Mr. Horton," was all Edwin's reply.

"Vexatious, eh? You will not think so long. Take off your overcoat, and tidy yourself up a little, there is some one in the drawing room," answered Mr. Horton, helping him, and in another minute he found himself ushered into the apartment where "some one" awaited him.

Mrs. Mordaunt, the mother of his Ethel, and now no longer

his enemy, rose, on his entrance, advanced a step to meet him, with her hand held forth in welcome—

“I am very happy to see you again at Lake Mordaunt, Mr. Vance.”

He knew now that all was right with his Ethel's parents. His hope was growing, it was nearing the long-sought fruition. Where was his Ethel?

But he could not reply to Mrs. Mordaunt; he uttered a few inaudible words in his glad confusion, in the sudden lightening of his heavy chain, and then his eye rested upon the beloved form at the further end of the room.

He advanced, doubtfully, timidly, hesitatingly. He advanced as if he had not the right towards his Ethel.

As he came forwards, she rose.

He looked into that dear face, and in its light, all was light henceforth to him.

“Can you forgive me, dear Edwin, for all this miserable past?”

Her white fingers were held out to him, her bright eyes were upon his face in timid, beseeching light, his beautiful Ethel had asked him to forgive her, in her tender words.

Oh! superfluous asking; as if it were not enough to him to be there, with her, and the past thrust back into dark oblivion.

“Dear Edwin,” she had said. The meaning flashed upon his sense, and the light once more shone upon his face. The sad, pained look that had dwelt upon his features for the long, sad months, now ended, disappeared, as her voice fell upon his ear, and Edwin Vance was once again the same Edwin Vance who had won his Ethel's love by the little lake in the bright summer far fled.

“Ethel, my darling, my own again, what have I to forgive? You have forgiven much! Oh! how happy I am again.”

Notwithstanding Mrs. Mordaunt's motherly presence, Edwin

clasped his unresisting Ethel in his arms, and imprinted the seal of their reconciliation upon her rosy lips. He ended their troubles with his kiss.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE BRIGHT SPRING-TIME.

The bright spring-time has come again, with the budding of green leaves, the springing of grass, covering the renewed landscapes that had lain dead under the white mantle of winter, with its soft, green carpet of summery life. The birds sang once more in the enlivened woods, and glorious Nature put on again her brightest change.

The white, cold winter had passed away, rapidly, joyously, let us hope, to all—as it had to Edwin Vance and his fair Ethel. A happy winter, that had brought no dreary storm to them, for they were once more all in all to each other.

On a bright May morning—the sun shining, the birds singing; green nature all beautiful; the blue sky arching over all its bright tintings; the flowers springing; the fair Canadian landscape alive with sound and light and beauty after the long, silent winter's sleep—Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt stood together in the Church at Ten Lakes, where so oft they had worshipped side by side, to take upon themselves the solemn vows that should bind them irrevocably to one another, with no dread of further separation to harass, until Death should place between this his dread parting hand.

For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; for this world, and—as we all hope—for the world to come. The words were said, the solemn vows paid, that made them one.

One for ever; no more Edwin Vance, with his life; no more Ethel Mordaunt, with her life; but, one together.

One for this world; one in thought, one in hope, one in everything.

One, to use their lives—now one life—in the way that their God ordains, for His glory. One to use their life, if they but use it as He ordains, wholly together.

Together for the good, together in pain, together in happiness. Together bearing this world's inevitable ills ; together forbearing, forgiving, smoothing each others inevitable human foibles, follies and evils.

Together working ; together striving—as they walk forward on the great road that past millions have trod ; that present millions are treading ; that future millions shall tread—the great road that leads poor humanity from earth to Heaven.

Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt became man and wife. In that they had become such they were very happy ; together to take up their way upon the great road, their love to lighten and ease the toilsome march.

Reverently they took up their vows ; reverently they took up their march, in each other's happiness to lighten the road. To be for each other, to help each other, to aid each other until God in His goodness should take them home. To be happy in each other's love ; in each other's strengthening hand on the way that all have to take.

Together to reach Him, if so be His good will ; to meet together, accepting His mercy, and in His good time reaching His heavenly recognition.

Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt plighted their vows in God's Church, before Him, and the world's sight, to be good and true man and wife together. In trustful joy and faith they plighted their troth, and they were happy in each other.

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The grand words of the Church that blesses the blending of the two lives into one life—for God and for the world, had been said, and Ethel Vance turns to receive the soft blessings of her earthly friends.

Husband, father, mother and uncle all were there to give

them, but where is her brother? Why is he not here? Why has he not come to-day? she thought, as she looked around for that absent face.

But he is not absent. He also comes—his kiss upon her cheek, also; and, then comes forward—Emily.

With hesitating step, timidly, doubtfully, with large, bright, soft eyes, fixed wistfully upon her face, Emily comes forward to Ethel.

The first time that they met since the terrible day that has been washed away—for which little Ally's last day of earth had been the peacemaker; with a new, quiet beauty that had not been Emily Dearborn's—that is very lovely on the face of Emily Mordaunt—Reggie's wife stepped forward—

“Ethel, may I kiss you?”

“Emily, my sister, my brother's wife, and my dear sister, let me kiss you, *We are sisters*,” said Ethel, as the two, beautiful exceedingly, clasped each other in tender embrace—there, in God's House.

Then came the joyous handshakings of the hundreds who had known and liked her, the neighbours, the townsmen, the men, women and children, who had crowded from miles around to see Ethel Mordaunt married.

Foremost among them, and absolutely gorgeous, comes Mr. Barney Conley—new beaver hat carefully tucked under his arm, new black coat shining in brilliant glossiness, longer, larger, more awe-inspiring than even the old displaced beauty; white collar of fabulous cut, which covered completely, instead of merely rasping off his ears; new, gorgeous and glorious from head to foot, came up Mr. Barney Conley.

“Begorra! an' it's the grate day intirely for Tin Lakes; a grate day, so it is. An' a proud day it is fur ye, Mishter Vance, Mimmer av Parlymint, though ye be, an' it's the purtiest young lady in Canedy ye're afther takin' aff wid ye. Miss Ethel, me darlint, sure an' its not forgittin' the ould Lake, an' ould Barney, ye'll be, now ye're marrit' an' laving us. Ye'll come back till see us all, wance in a while, wont ye now, me purty, swate jewel av the wurruld? It's missing, I'll be, the swate face and the kind wurd for many the long day,” and Barney, with Ethel's warm

grasp on his honest, hard hand, had to brush away something from his eyes.

"If I forget the old Lake, or you, Barney, my dear old friend, I shall no longer be the Ethel's ordaunt who has lived all her life with you, Barney. That will not be in this world," answered Ethel Vance.

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The wedding breakfast was over, the speeches made, the joyous congratulations repeated, the tearful farewells whispered, and Ethel, with her husband, had started upon their new life.

As the fast horses sped over the road towards Cascades, commencing the journey that separated Ethel from her girlhood to begin her new life, her proud and happy husband turned towards her, and said—

"Ethel, my wife, my own, for ever, whom nothing can now divide from me, listen, my darling, to what I have to say, in my great happiness.

"In this crowning of the dearest hopes of my life, when all the world is bright before me, when, in my marriage with you, my darling, my life is made a prized life to me ; when, to have lost you, would have been its ruin ; when, by God's kindness, I am made happy, let me tell you, Ethel, my loved wife, from my deep unworthiness, in my self-knowing humility, that I have to acknowledge that, although in her bright love, my wife has become my wife, she might have done better !

"Your bright young life, Ethel, has been seared with trial, dimmed with sorrow, wet with tears, and overcast with bleak grief, through me, through my selfish love.

"The 'Before' your life, before your marriage, which now commences your new life, has not been so bright as it might, as it should have been, my love, not since I have known and loved you, at the least. But I pray, I humbly trust that, when the story of its 'After' comes to be chronicled, it may reveal a brighter page.

"God grant that as you have entrusted your beautiful young life to me, my darling wife, that I may be rendered worthy of the care, that He may help me ; help us both to walk before Him together in His way ; His grace aiding, until we come to the Everlasting Kingdom."

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